

# *spare* Rib

4th  
Birthday  
Issue

One of  
Kent's  
fighting  
farm-  
workers  
see  
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Interviewing  
Glenda  
Jackson

Sex-  
Telepathy  
doesn't  
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China  
reappraised  
- one  
woman's  
view



Equal  
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the Pay  
Deal -  
the Big  
Question  
Mark

Anyone  
for  
Surfing?

New Song  
from  
Peggy  
Seeger

Self-  
Help  
Therapy



Eli Zaretsky

Capitalism,  
the Family,  
and  
Personal  
Life

Man for the field and  
woman for the hearth  
Man for the sword and  
woman for the needle she: Man  
with the head and Woman  
with the heart: Man  
command and Woman  
obey: All else confusion  
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obey: all else  
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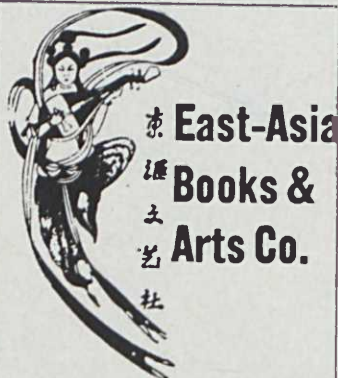
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# spare Rib

July 1976 Cover

Kathleen Kidd, Kent farmworker, photographed by Michael Ann Mullen

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Spare Rib is produced collectively by Rose Ades, Anny Brackx, Alison Fell, Marion Fudger, Victoria Green, Sue Hobbs, Wisty Hoyland, Susan Lambert, Laura Margolis, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Linda Phillips, Jane Prince, Marsha Rowe, Ann Scott, Eleanor Stephens.

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Spare Rib is published by Spare Ribs Ltd, 9 Newburgh Street, London W1A 4XS. Telephone 01-437 2070. Printed by Carlisle Web Offset Ltd, Newtown Trading Estate, Carlisle CA2 7NR. Typesetting by Caroline MacKechnie, 105 Golborne Road, London W10. Distributed by Moore Harness Ltd, 31 Chelsea Street, London N5.

ISBN 0306 7971

FARMWORKERS PHOTO BY MICHAEL ANN MULLEN  
LEFT, ANN HARRIS, IRIS MORRIS, KATHLEEN KIDD



# Spare Rib is four years old and STILL FIGHTING....

fighting.....

In 1975 full-time women workers were earning on average £30.19 against a male wage of £59.58

\* Women's average weekly earnings as a percentage of men's — full time manual

	1950	1975
	58.7	57.4

In 1975 33% of all full-time women workers earned less than £30 per week; less than 2.3% of men were on such low wages

and fighting

Cuts	
New nursery building plan	
1974/5	1976/7
£15m	£8.5m
Unemployed nurses due to NHS cuts	
June 1975	December 1975
2,348	4,302

Summer 1974		
O level	Girls	Boys
Domestic subjects	67,992	1,326
Physics/Chemistry	73,266	171,501

OFFICIALLY young girls in London's Holloway prison are kept separate from older offenders.

In reality, they mix with child killers, prostitutes, lesbians, alcoholics, drug addicts and sundry other crooks.

DAILY MIRROR, Monday, May 10, 1976

fighting

In one year in Britain 1052 women reported being raped. 341 rapists were convicted. In U.S.A. 70% of rape victims don't report the crime.

7 million anti-depressants are taken by women every day

70% of the users of anti-anxiety drugs are women

and fighting.....

"The wines of Bordeaux are complex, sophisticated and feminine. And, like women, they take a good deal of knowing and need to be most carefully looked after."

When did you last beat your wife?

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In three of the other three the two

1/4 of violent crimes are wife assaults

\* unless specified figures are for Britain



## From rapists to rabbits

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I would like to raise two points about the content of the May issue. The first concerns the analysis of the crime of rape. Whilst agreeing with both articles in general, I felt that the extent to which the male aggressor was viewed solely as an aggressor was unfortunate. Little emphasis was placed on the extent to which the rapist is both aggressor and victim, i.e. that the individual who rapes is essentially one who has been deeply affected by a sexist/capitalist society. Whilst this in no way detracts from the psychological and physical damage done to rape victims; nor from the need for political action against rape and existing rape laws, nor indeed from the need for socio-historical analysis of this crime, it is by no means obvious that the situation will be improved by using capitalist laws against individual male aggressors. Under such laws only the most vulnerable will be prosecuted, e.g. the "working class", the "uneducated", those who cannot buy their "justice".

The second point concerns the use of "pretty" images of animals in the subscription advertisement. The pictures of chickens, rabbits, lambs, etc. were extremely romanticised in view of the actual fate of most animals in this society, i.e. to be butchered. So please no more pictures of ducks wearing bonnets and cheerful, chubby chickens — they don't look like that in the abattoir.

Best wishes,  
Ruth  
Dollar  
Perth

## Amongst alien porn

\*Dear *Spare Rib*,

I was recently browsing in a local newsagent, having already bought a copy of April *Spare Rib* from another shop. Imagine my surprise, and amusement when I recognised the yellow cover slotted in next to *New Directions* (Adults Only!) and *Girl Illustrated*, and numerous other "soft" porn magazines!

I explained to the manager that *Spare Rib* isn't porn and should be alongside either political magazines or general women's magazines; after some argument, he agreed to move them, and I in turn promised to buy two issues every month from him (one for a friend in Jamaica who looks forward to receiving it when I can get it).

To find copies of *Spare Rib* — look in the porn section! One consolation — at least he stocks your paper!

Yours,  
Louise Ludlow  
Redhill  
Surrey

## Lovemaking and menstruation

Dear Friends,

I felt that your otherwise excellent guide to periods (SR 47) was marred by the negative attitude towards making love during a period. Discussing this with friends, we found that many of us particularly enjoy sex at this time and feel more aroused than usual (to do with the congestion of the genital area, I'm told!). The worries about mess and smell and squeamishness which preoccupy the author are part of general social attitudes towards healthy bodily processes and we try to overcome this conditioning. Far from the vagina being dry, it is usually well lubricated with fluids, and anyway the sensitivity of the vagina is not supremely important since we connect pleasurable sensations with the clitoris. (Your author could have stressed alternatives to vaginal penetration for making love at this time.)

As for the joke about the guy who carries on regardless, this was in worse taste and smell than any menstrual blood! Best wishes as ever,  
A.B.  
Surrey

## Diagnose don't tranquilise

Dear *Spare Rib*,

In your April issue of *Spare Rib* you mentioned that women are prescribed tranquilisers for what are really societal problems ('Pills for All Ills'). Tranquilisers are also given as substitute treatment of physical ills. I am writing this letter because I have had this happen to me, and I wish to share my experience with other women.

About a year ago I began having a pain on the side of my breast. I went to see my GP who diagnosed it as psychological, and prescribed tranquilisers. I later figured out that this pain was caused by gas, and a Renny tablet cleared it up. This incident planted the first seed of doubt in my mind about my emotional stability, since it was several months until I got it sorted out.

I then noticed that I was starting to become clumsy. It was very frustrating for both me and my husband. He was not much help at that time, but just got angry with me. I was beginning to feel a bit out of control of my body. This is especially difficult for me because I am a full-time student of the classical guitar; and I watched myself cease to progress, and later, begin to regress.

Last spring, I decided to enrol in a trampoline class. One day, I lost control of my balance and fell on the trampoline in a very awkward manner. My body went numb on one side. I thought I'd done some kind of injury to myself, so I

went to the doctor. When the numbness started moving around to different parts of my body, he again diagnosed it as emotional and prescribed tranquilisers.

I began to think my clumsiness must also be caused by emotions. I thought I was somehow preventing myself from walking properly and from playing the guitar. I was convinced that I was having an emotional breakdown, and could not really figure out why.

Around Christmastime, I had a short spurt of fainting spells. These were happening only at night, when I would get up to use the toilet. When I went to the doctor he suggested using a chamberpot. There was no investigation as to the cause of my fainting.

Meanwhile, my clumsiness was getting so bad that I could not play my guitar at all. I also could not walk smoothly any more. My movements had become jerky and difficult. The doctor had put me off so badly that I could not return to him.

During February a friend told me of a new GP in our area. I went to see him, and he sent me to the hospital. The symptoms I have had this last year have been caused by an attack of multiple sclerosis. If it had gone undiagnosed for much longer there could have been serious physical damage. As it is, it is still unclear if I will play the guitar again.

I am concerned that other women could have very real physical problems that will go untreated because of similar prejudice, as to women's weaknesses, on the part of their GP. Please, don't be fobbed off on tranquilisers!

Yours sincerely,  
Georgie Machtinger-Brodey  
London SE26

## Come to stay

Dear *Spare Rib*,

Are there any of you with teenage sons and daughters who'd like to get away from you for a bit? I have a sophisticated 13-year-old daughter who doesn't attend the brutal be-numbing schools round here, but who consequently suffers from total lack of contact with her peers (my friend's kids are far too young). She'd get on with youngsters between 13 and 17: we'd be pleased to have short or long-term visitors, (providing they get on of course). If you're poor, we'll



have them free and sort out the journey for you. Any young readers — please write direct.  
Hopefully,  
Jenny James  
Atlantis  
Burtonport  
Letterkenny  
Co. Donegal Eire

## Forceful cuckoo

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I would like to make some comments on Margaret Walters' review of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* after having seen the film myself. Perhaps the uneasiness and resentment that you felt, feeling that you had been seduced into accepting something much too simple, came from the fact that on the subconscious level, the film had very sinister implications of what could happen to any of us with a bit of spunk if we decided to step too much out of line, or to be full of resistance, as McMurphy was against the hospital stiff sick system, very much like the one we live in presently. I think too that the scenes of electric shock treatment on McMurphy were particularly terrifying, almost feeling them myself, the way his brain was abused just because it intelligently and logically came to the conclusion that the society that had led him to the position he was in was insane and not himself. Regarded as 'Dangerous'. Yes, certainly because he was capable of instigating an uprising from all the other poor souls who had been numbed into a hell of an existence.

V.J. Scharaer  
P.S. I don't even think it was so much McMurphy's machismo which was portrayed as being untameable but just his pure life force that manifests itself in men and women. Or women and men.

## Intergalactic influences

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I liked the article on science fiction. Still, if *Metropolis* provoked Adolf the Bastard to make grandiose attempts at world domination, and Charles Manson stole all his ideas from *Stranger in a Strange Land*, what happens when *The Female Man* attains greater popularity?

Love,  
Jon Gunson  
Manchester









... on Gudrun in *Women in Love*: "Gudrun was using the only power she'd got which was sex but she did, within the limits of herself, wish to explore herself. She was quite honest about herself."



... on Alex in *Sunday Bloody Sunday*: "Her intelligence would always tell her one thing but her emotions demand another. But her head would never stop functioning."





... as Elizabeth I, the elaborate, heavy, artificial clothes safely distance Glenda Jackson, neutralizing her powerful and dominating personality.



... as Sarah Bernhardt.



## Marvel comics

Dear *Spare Rib*,  
In your article on women and science fiction, 'Intergalactic Zap' (SR 46), you show two comic characters saying "you don't understand. You're a girl and men aren't supposed to fight girls." "One, I am a woman, not a girl..." These lines were not spoken by Superman and the other character you show, they were spoken by Iron Fist and Colleen Wing in Marvel Comics *Iron Fist* (British reprint *Avengers* no. 124). Marvel Comics have a policy, I believe, of being as non-sexist as possible, and the quotes from *Iron Fist* are completely out of context when one considers the whole theme of the story, which concerns Iron Fist trying to reconcile the martial arts philosophies he learnt in the hidden city of K'un-Lun, with the realities of the modern world. In the duel with Colleen it is obvious that she is as capable as he is, which attacks the sexist ways and beliefs of K'un-Lun.

Marvel command a vast audience, and with their feminist characters such as Valkyrie and the Cat, are presenting the concept of equality to many people who would be untouched by literature of the *Spare Rib* type. One of their triumphs in this field was the story where Conan, an ever-so-masculine, powerful, all-conquering barbarian hero was completely out-tricked and out-done by the feminist Red Sonja (about the only time ever that he failed to defeat everyone and everything in sight). It seems unfair, when Marvel are making such an effort, and being successful, that you should completely misrepresent them.

Yours sincerely,  
Dot Walker  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

## No more frigidity fears

Dear *Spare Rib*,  
Please publish more practical information along the lines of 'Unlearning not to have orgasms' (*Spare Rib* 44). Until reading this I had never reached orgasm although I have been married for four years. I was beginning to become extremely depressed and thought that I was totally frigid. My marriage has been a happy and rewarding one but until now incomplete because of this. I had no idea how to masturbate or how orgasms occurred but of even greater significance was that the article helped me to overcome my fear, suspicion and guilt about this whole area. I have talked to other women (I recently joined a health group), and it is truly amazing how many women go through years of their life in complete ignorance of their own potential to share sexual pleasure with their husbands and boyfriends. Your article has given

me new hope and courage and added a new dimension to my life. But I still have some anxiety when I masturbate and am uncertain how frequently one should healthily masturbate and also how quickly one can achieve a climax again after the first orgasm. So more on this topic would be very helpful to me and other women.

Yours gratefully,  
A.B.  
Bristol  
*Masturbation is certainly not harmful, and how often is up to you; more on the subject of sexuality on page 36.*

## Comparisons are useful

\*Dear *Spare Rib*,  
I'd like to share the lessons that psychiatric hospitalisation taught me. In 1968 I was admitted to Halliwick Hospital. I had run away from home because I felt my home was an intolerable place. Halliwick in 1968 was a most enlightened place, how enlightened I was not to realise, alas, until later. Patients were encouraged to paint, to sculpt and write. I contributed to the Hospital magazine and found it very helpful in expressing myself. But due to parental pressure, I was removed from Halliwick and treated privately by a very fashionable Harley Street psychiatrist. His answer was drugs, which, to put it mildly, did not prove an effective solution.

Later I was admitted to Napsbury Hospital. Napsbury has a padded cell. I was placed in a locked ward and spent one night in the cell. The question I should like to ask psychiatric social workers who are readers of this magazine is: should I have been placed into what is to all intents and purposes a psychiatric prison, and not a hospital?

All love in sisterhood,  
Stephanie Biber



# BACK COPIES

## This month's bargain pack

Each month we are going to offer a specially selected package of back copies, each of which is particularly relevant to the current issue. This month's *Spare Rib* sees the start of a children's page (see page 47) and the back copies selected all concern childcare.

14/Aug 73 "Are children loved enough or too little?" Sue Lipshitz describes some views of 'expert' child psychologists, shows that the 'quality' of the love is important and how we can begin to develop alternative childcare patterns.

17/Nov 73 The first childcare centre funded by a local council was set up at 123 Dartmouth Park Hill, London. The group involved explain how they negotiated with the council, the difficulties they surmounted and the day-to-day running of the centre.

28/Oct 74 Minimal recognition of their worth, and frustration faced in their work — these factors, among others, led to some childminders organising themselves, making demands which they sent to the NUPE executive. In this article they talk about their work and their demands.

30/Dec 74 Spare Parts — coping with trains, buses, escalators, shopping centres, librarians and big stores — and a baby which needs to be changed and fed.

35/May 75 "Bringing up kids in a commune doesn't automatically kill off the nuclear family but there can be a lot more messing at the edges." Five women members of a mixed commune talk about how they deal with childcare.

36/June 75 Cuts in Government spending affect childcare facilities. Two women involved in a nursery campaign look at recent influences on Government thinking and show how nursery provision is being decreased and childminding on the cheap developed.

41/Nov 75 Women in Armagh, Northern Ireland, describe their fight to form a playgroup on their housing estate. The British Army is ever present; they called the playgroup 'Saorise' — 'freedom' in Irish.

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Surfing is a major preoccupation of most Australians. The myth of the surfer is exclusively masculine — women figure in it merely as beach accessories. Marsha Rowe

looks at the history of surfing as a sport and finds women surfers fighting for their place in the waves.

# Surfing, Sisters?

Surfing is an irresistible activity. Surfing was first seen by white Westerners whose sailing explorations took them to the Polynesian islands of the Pacific Ocean. In Hawaii they recorded that when the sea offered a good run of waves, 'the thatch houses of a whole village stood empty' and 'such daily tasks as farming, fishing and tapa-making were left undone while the entire community — men, women and children — enjoyed themselves in the rising surf and rushing white water.' Rituals of rank and courtship involved surfing in Hawaiian life, where surfing with fourteen feet long wooden boards was a sophisticated skill. Calvinist missionaries infiltrating the islands in the nineteenth century were aroused to a panic and denounced surfing not only as wasteful of working hours but as morally dangerous.

This sport which had possessed such a deep fascination almost faded off into a memory as the number of Hawaiians living shrunk during the century to a seventh of the original population, unable to survive the European diseases and the manipulation of their culture and lives for the growth of export crops like sugar.

To the British immigrating one way or another to Australia surfing was an unknown sport. The Australian Aborigines did not surf. The Victorian Australians gathered at the beach to dilly-dally along the shore, chat and

stroll and play, always fully clothed.

By the beginning of the twentieth century Australians were venturing up to their waists into the surf. They were still only splashing about, until the body surfing of Tommy Tanya who was Polynesian and working as a gardener's boy in Manly, Sydney excited and impressed the beachgoers and so opened up the new recreation of surf bathing which, by 1910, was public and popular.

But the waves swelling up and dashing against the Australian coastline can be fierce and are unpredictable. Along with the enthusiastic bodies carrying themselves into shore, shoulders up and legs kicking, on the wave crest, came frequent deaths from rips, undertows and curling, curving dumpers. The first rescuer of some young boys being swept along a deep channel at Coogee Beach in 1911 was admonished for being naked by the local council. After the formation of the Surf Bathers' Association in 1907 the members marched from Bondi Beach into the city in protest against a group of local Mayors' insistence they cover themselves and wear skirts on their neck-to-knee costumes: 'and an hilarious protest march it must have been, for the brawny surfers were dressed in their sisters' petticoats, in skirts made of old chaff bags, in the weirdest assortment of clothing that fulfilled the council demands for 'a skirt' and everyone else's

need for a good laugh, to the full. In the face of such ridicule, no more was heard of the 'skirts for all bathers' issue.

Modesty did not prevent the growth of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia which is, still, a voluntary organisation of clubs around the Australian coast whose members train rigorously and maintain a rescue patrol by roster of their Active Members of the surfing beaches. Women are neither allowed to become Active Members of the clubs, nor Associate Members who pay higher subscriptions to use the club facilities.

In Summer 1975 the surf clubs responded to two years of pressure and conducted a survey amongst their members on whether women should be allowed into the Association. Paul Sargeant described the event at his club house, Wanda, in Sydney:

"We had a lengthy discussion and the vote was a tie, 44 all. The chairman had the deciding vote. Our club was against it. Overall the clubs were against. Many people thought the questionnaire was too vague and because of the number of complaints they had it went back to the sub-committee. The decision was that it would be great for all country clubs which are scratching for members but for city clubs with 250 active members it's not really necessary. They said women can't take the physical endurance of it. How many women can put on a surf belt and rescue somebody? And that it would lead to the downfall of the surf club. All the men get together on the grog and they would be kept tied down to their wives. There would have to be new locker rooms and new showers."

Against the military efficiency and strict discipline of the surf clubs and the brylcreemed superman image of their members, the Australian surfing youth of the sixties rebelled and went off on new tracks, posing their own brand of romantic individualism as an alternative. They took up the Malibu surfboard which was being manufactured in California in the fifties out of balsa wood. It preceded the fibre glass boards which became popular in the seventies. These are shorter, lighter, and also individually sanded and shaped.

Hawaiian girl riding the surf in pre-missionary days





The new surfers went to the waves as loners, searching for the ultimate experience, challenging the work ethic. Their message was that waves are better than orgasms:

*"A surfer is someone who, although such things as music, bikes, sex, art, food etc. may give him a slight buzz, saves his richest superlatives for his relationship with the sea."* (from Honi Soit, Sydney University paper.)

Surfers travelled immense distances and charted their own underground maps describing the coastal wave formations. Magazines and films emerged out of their new world.

The editor of a current surfing newspaper, Phil Jarrat, from Wollongong, originally left school to become a carpet salesman. In a recent interview he joked,

*"Oh yeah . . . it's surfing, bludging surfies, they all go on the dole and they live off the government. I reckon it's disgusting."* His hip humour continued, *"In a way I guess I am a sexist. I don't think women are very good surfers, for a start . . . it's something to do with their tits."*

Women are considered just 'surfy chicks' who hang around.

*"You never ever ride a board yourself, even though you may spend half your life on the beach and in a culture which says that surfing is the be-all and end-all of existence."* (An 'ex-surfy chick' writing in Honi Soit.)

Jody Denford was also born in Wollongong and became a keen surf board rider. Jody described her life and the surfing scene in Wollongong for Spare Rib:

*"All my life I lived across the road from the beach, and anyone who didn't have anything to do with surfing I didn't like when I was younger. All Wollongong is, is the surf. That's all there is for young people. Most of the Olympic Games swimmers are from Wollongong. There isn't any other life. I used to pitch my tent down on the beach and wait for the dawn."*

*"The general school leaving age here is 14. The population is growing, there's 125,000 people living in Wollongong now. There's never been work for girls, except in a few clothing factories which*

*have closed down over the last two years. There are about 10,000 women unemployed in Wollongong because the only industry there is the steelworks — BHP employs 23,000 men and only 900 women who do cleaning and clerical work — and the other main work is the coal mines but women are not allowed in the mines."*

*"There are some surf board factories now, and one factory owner is employing women to do the pin lining — the thin lines which go all the way round the surf board. He is employing women because he says women are the best at it, the neatest. I used to work for one, he had three shops, one selling boards and two selling surfboard clothes."*

*"It isn't cool for girls to go on surf boards. I started when I was seven, so it didn't affect me, but all the smart comments really get you down. Girls have to go when the surf is down to practise, or to secluded beaches."*

*"There are five main beaches in Wollongong. There would be fights amongst the boys about which beach was the beach. The girls would just sit back and say how stupid."*

*"But now the property developers have bulldozed down the pine trees which used to line the beaches. They're putting up high rise buildings all along the fronts, which cast shadows on the beach. They're trying to buy the beaches."*

Early engraving celebrating female expertise





# Young Feminists Report from the Beach Head

Research and interviews by Jody Denford (right) and Nolene Syme (left). Reprinted from the second issue of Mabel, the Australian women's liberation newspaper.



Is surfing only for guys, or can girls surf too? Well, women are supposed to have better balance. But why aren't there many women surfing? Maybe it's not cool for girls to surf. And the attitudes of most guys would turn you off, even if you wanted to.

When we asked guys what they thought of girls surfing, their answers were amazing. Some said, "It would be cool and more girls should get into it." But not many said that. Then there were those who said, "Oh, yeah, that would be all right. If they only went out for a wave and not for a pose," as they flicked their hair back and checked to see if anyone was looking.

Some other comments were: "They're not supposed to be out there on boards. They should be on the beach waiting for their guy," and, "Girls can't surf. Why ask?" One real smart guy from Narooma said, "The cunts are hopeless. Some are all right, but not as good as guys."

These answers were not collected from one beach. They were from all over the country, inland and right around the coastal areas. These were the answers that quite a few guys believed.

Girls, when asked if they would like to surf, gave answers like: "Yes, but my boyfriend wouldn't like it." Others were: "Yes, but how could you when guys wouldn't give them a go," and "No, surfing is too much of a cool thing to do, and that really shits me off," and, "I would, but I'd feel a bit paranoid about the critical reactions from girls and guys."

We asked a few people about males and females competing against each other in events. One young man said he didn't think girls should compete against guys in local events. Only when they became professionals. They should have their own events until they become professionals. Our answer is: Aren't we good enough to compete against local guys? Are they on higher levels?

One girl said, "It's a good idea if they were judged on their ability to ride and not by a name." One male's answer was, "Competitions in the surfing scene are pretty shithouse. Maybe women might stop a bit of that 'I'm better than you' thing that comes out. And also that 'I ride such and such a board, I'm cool' thing."

Another girl said, "True surfing is not trying to beat the person next to you. It's a feeling of being alive and getting a bit of freedom. It's more of an art. People have wrecked the true meaning of surfing and the waves by commercializing it."

When we asked guys if their egos would be put down if a girl beat them in a surfing event, they all answered, "Yes. But I wouldn't feel put down if a guy beat me in a running race." So maybe it's time their huge egos were put down a bit.

We asked a few people why they call women "chicks". Answers:

"Because they are."

"Don't know. Never thought about it."

"I just say it because I was brought up near the surf and chicks is what we call girls."

"I have used it all my life and my father says it."

"You see it all the time in magazines and you hear it all the time. Next thing you know, you're saying it."

Don't let society mould your brains. We do have names. □

Mabel is available for 20 cents Aust. from Women's House, 25 Alberta Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000, Australia.



Muscles and brylcreem:  
Australian life-savers team, 1939

## Did you know?

1. According to legend the wahines of early Hawaii were just as clever as the men on boards.
2. The beauty of Hawaiian women surfers delighted many a European visitor around 1819. The missionaries who arrived the following year soon put a stop to it.
3. In ancient Hawaii women also enjoyed the waves and, according to legend, at least one surfing beach, Kekaioamamala (The Sea of Mamala) was named after a champion woman surfer.
4. Wollongong formed the first Women's Rescue and Resuscitation team in the world.
5. Coogee and Manly also started a Women's Rescue and Resuscitation team in 1911.
6. When female and male surfers competed against each other in event, Linda Bensen (U.S.A.) was the 1964 World Title Winner. Other title winners were Mick Doyle, Nat Young, 'Midget' Farely and Joey Cabell. Mention that a woman also won and people just don't believe you.
7. Another former world champion surfboard rider was a woman: Joyce Hoffman.
8. Judy Trim won Australian Titles in 1968 and State Titles in 1968-69.
9. The Hang Ten Women's International Contest was held in California on September 20, 1975 for "Women Only". First was Margo Oberg and she took home the \$US1,500 prize money. Second was Linda Westfall (Hawaii) and third was Linda Davoli (New Jersey). There were ten placings. Australia's sole invitee was Gail Couper, but she was unable to make the trip.
10. In America there has been a Women's International Surfing Association formed (WISA). The Association distributes a bi-monthly bulletin called "Women in Waves" to its members. WISA was formed in 1975 in California and is open to any woman surfer in the world. Their address is: WISA, Pam Maher, PO Box 407, Huntington Beach, California 92648, USA. ●



# WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VIBRATORS

As the first company to introduce vibrators into the U.K. and having sold some hundred of thousands, we feel that we know more about them and their use than most.

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The vibrator is designed and is far more effective when used for clitoral stimulation and its undoubted value for this purpose has been well established by Masters and Johnson in their book "An Analysis of Human Sexual Response." In the book they describe how, using a similar device, they were able to bring to orgasm women who have never before reached a climax.

These were extreme cases obviously. Normally, the vibrator is used to provide extra stimulation during love making and is particularly useful where the woman's response tends to be slow. And, of course, it is just as often used purely for personal pleasure.

Finally a word about quality. There are many different makes on the market today, all of similar design, ranging in quality from very good to absolutely useless. We have been selling the same model for seven years and have enough confidence in it to offer you our special 'money refund' service if you are not satisfied.

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Please send me a Harmony Personal Vibrator.  
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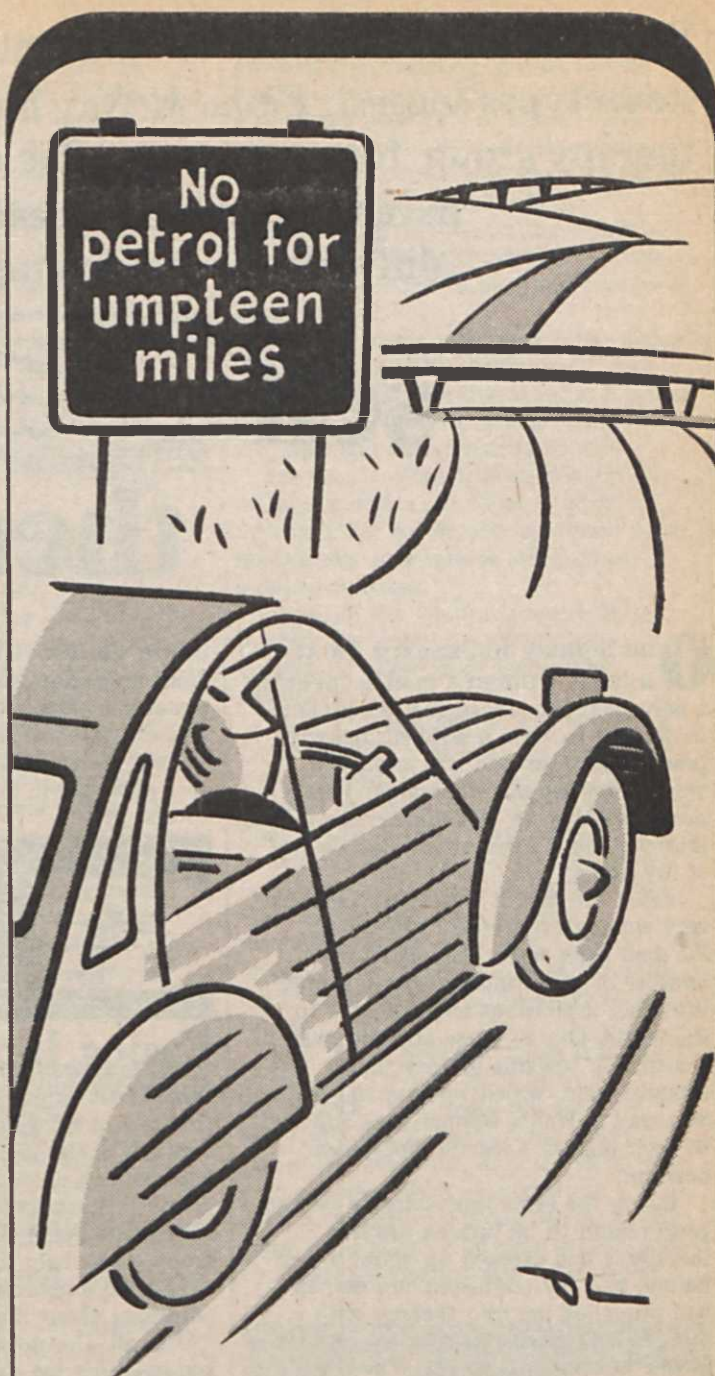
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**CITROËN ^ 2CV**



Women's liberation does not guarantee women individual strength, as some stereotypes suggest. *Fiona McKay* has been a member of a women's self-help therapy group for over a year. She describes how five committed feminists have tried to support each other through emotional difficulties, and to grapple with personal change.

self



help

## therapy

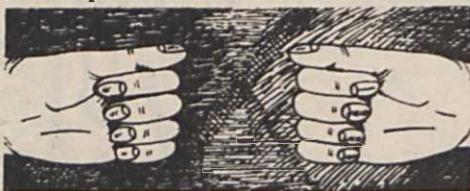
One Sunday in January 75 at a local women's centre meeting I nervously announced that a couple of us wanted to form a self-help therapy group, and if anyone was interested would they see me afterwards? I sat down, shaking. In fact there was a lot of interest, and a week or so later we met at my home.

From the first it was a very cohesive, very women's movement-type group. We'd all been active feminists for a number of years and we shared similar lifestyles, aspirations and attitudes to the world. One of these attitudes was a suspicion towards the psychiatric establishment, which we saw, roughly, as a way in which women were adjusted to their limited roles and oppressed position.

But at the same time some of us had good reason to be turning towards therapy. I had cracked up about a year before, and my confusion and despair had propelled me into therapy with a progressive-type therapist who worked in the 'Growth Movement'. Pat joined the group only because she 'was having specific problems in coping with my day-to-day life — really bad panic attacks and continuous feelings of unreality. I found it impossible to be on my own for any length of time and got really dependent on a few people I was close to.' She wanted to share her experiences with women who had undergone similar things, in a context where there was no need to feel paranoid and defensive, and she wanted to understand how and why such alarming states came about. Annie had had 'some kind of breakdown a couple of years before, and had always felt I was pretty unstable. I didn't understand why everyday life should be so hellish difficult — I felt like an invalid, a complete mess.'

Liz and Marion didn't suffer the particular disturbances which the rest of us did, nor the shame that comes from feeling you're not 'normal' in society's eyes, so their notions of what they could get from such a group were more open-ended. Liz felt it was a good idea to have such a project at the women's

centre, but didn't know what to expect from it. Marion wanted 'a more structured setting than friendship where I could express fears and worries — there's less guilt at talking about worries to a small group than pouring it out to one person.'



### Easing Into It

It was hard to get established. In the first few meetings people's doubts and conflicts about the whole enterprise kept coming up. At the time I noted down: 'Marion and I were trying to convince Pat and Greta that the therapy group might help them — we felt they were being rather puritan and self-punishing about their needs. Pat said "After all, I've no way of understanding and assessing the use of therapy. It would just be a prop, something to give me hope — but such an arbitrary one." Greta argued strenuously that emotional problems could only be worked out with the people you lived with. Marion and I, as strenuously, opposed this.'

Greta in fact decided against joining, and the rest of us, having agreed that it was worth a try, had a look through a U.S. women's therapy book called 'Getting Clear' and decided to try a few of the breathing and relaxing exercises. Those who felt too vulnerable to panics just looked on, enjoying the giggles — whenever we did physical exercises there was a lot of embarrassment to break through — and picking up on the physical enjoyment. Afterwards I wrote: 'Perhaps we should try a few low-key trust games. If those of us who are panicky can relax and play a bit under the indulgent eyes of the group, it might be a big step forward.'

We did play trust games — specially the one where one woman goes into the centre of a ring made by the others, and lets herself be pushed gently, eyes closed, from one pair of arms to the

next, lets others take all the responsibility for catching her. And we did consciously develop an indulgent and supportive atmosphere, one in which anyone could give in to tears, panic, or shakes without being made to feel ashamed. We tended to support and accept each other fully, and therefore ease conflicts a lot, rather than actually urge each other into emotional expression all the time, which happens in encounter and a lot of Growth Movement groups. This gentleness and reticence was partly due to inexperience, partly a response to the states some of us were in — severe states which imposed a certain cautious pace, a politeness, even, the limitations of which I'll discuss later.

At the start of every meeting, each woman would say how she was feeling, and then we'd decide whether to try exercises or deal with a pressing anxiety someone was suffering. We would give all attention to that person, letting her talk and talk, questioning carefully and encouraging her to pour out the whole thing and connect with the feelings more. Somehow, it was working. Pat recalls: 'I got really high from some of the meetings — I remember feeling really relaxed and 'purged' afterwards, so that Monday was a terribly important day for me.'

For Annie, 'It was like an adventure. There was a lot of warmth, even though some of us hardly knew each other, and I found it very supportive. All of which is amazing, since three of us were in a terrible state at that time, just keeping ourselves together and no more. I'm glad we took it easy and built up mutual trust. Having food afterwards was like a real treat — and then there was the swimming . . .'

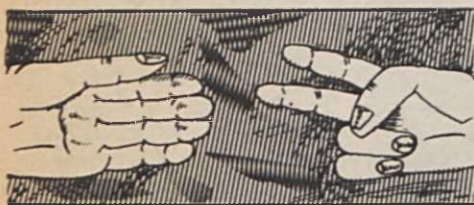
Sometimes, using the same group listening technique, we would focus on someone's dream, or on an emotionally charged topic like dependence or competitiveness.

Annie: 'I remember one meeting which was really good for me, in some mysterious way. When it was my turn I was talking about a dream about my father, who's dead. The dream was very



upsetting. I felt that exploring the emotions and discovering more really worked for me. Some questions that were asked made me discover things I hadn't remembered or realised. I got into the dream completely, enjoyed recreating the atmosphere; it was exciting, like a cross between writing and reading something really good. Although I got really upset, I felt unbelievably happy afterwards, as if a weight had been lifted off me.'

Some of the dream sessions were extremely creative, we inspired one another; sharing our vulnerability often tipped over into sharing pleasure and laughter. There were deeply tragic things too, deaths and fears — sometimes it seemed that the whole world and our experience of it were revealed in dream form — our individual anger at oppression, our anguish about the fact of torture, the hidden damage of class, the war in Ireland.



## Exploring Emotions

Yet we related to the group in different ways, and got different things from it. Pat: 'I never got much out of dreams apart from a fairly detached interest in how dreams come together. I got most out of the times when we each talked for ten minutes on the same topic — trust, passivity or whatever — you just got such a clear picture of all the different experiences, a sort of spectrum. It had a sort of seesaw effect, because — not just when I was talking but when other people were — it helped stir up associations for me.'

Marion: 'I remember a particular one. It was after a week of extreme self-hate — I didn't want to talk but the others questioned me, made me examine my misery and the talking loosened me until I cried. Then the others hugged me and gave general comfort. It was like when sympathy makes you cry. Afterwards I felt better, the weight of self-hatred lifted and hasn't returned as badly since.'

Often if I'd been instrumental in helping someone else come to grips with some emotional difficulty, discover more, and be in some way freed by it, I felt at least as good as they did afterwards. I felt happy, somehow more potent and effective — we all felt this in various degrees.

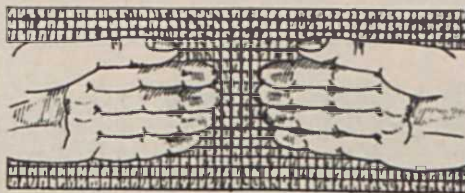
Liz: 'When it's been obvious that the person definitely felt better afterwards, I've felt good, really useful. But I don't think I've really got through anything myself. I remember being upset and coming to meetings and feeling less upset when I left, through talking and everyone listening to me, but it didn't last very long for me personally, because I don't think I ever got very deeply into

the feelings.'

Since we were trying to work collectively the responsibility to play a positive, helpful role bore down heavily sometimes. Pat: 'There was a long period in which I used to feel on edge all the time because of the pressure I felt to be asking all those perceptive questions. At one level I was tuned in, really listening and empathising, but at another I was just feeling that I ought to be proving myself as a worthwhile — effective — member. A few times I was almost completely paralysed by this feeling that I ought to say something, ask a question, just for the sake of saying something.'

All of us had different needs for attention and help, and different ways of asking for it. Those who suffered more extreme states often took priority — we didn't quite achieve the sort of structure which would have ensured that each woman felt an equal responsibility for taking the time and space to explore her own emotional predicament, but which had enough fluidity to allow for sudden crises and explosions of need.

Liz: 'It's complicated working out who most needs attention, how much effort you've got to put into helping others, and how much you need to take out. It means that all the time you're in a very conscious, rational situation, trying to sort this out.'



## Too Kind And Polite

There are certain feelings like anger which we've found very difficult to express and deal with. We're all feminists with quite a sophisticated rational understanding of the ways women are conditioned in this society, and we all want to change it. We know, for instance, that women have been forced into competition against one another in terms of sex appeal, intellect etc., for men's approval. However, at times this rational understanding has worked against us. For instance, I came to one session convulsed with guilt and unhappiness because of the antagonism and competitiveness I felt towards Liz. I plucked up my courage and tried to tell her this in the supportive atmosphere of the group. I was lying on the bed, leaden, my chin tucked down onto my chest, my voice constricted, mumbling how I thought she never gave me any credit for things I did, always seemed to be putting me down, and so on. Merely talking and discovering what she felt about me helped to dispel some of the conflict between us — but it ended with the whole group reassuring us; collectively we explained and analyzed everything away. I was left with my volcanic feelings. Whereas if

the group had urged us to act out a physical confrontation, got us to yell and swear at each other, these feelings might have been able to erupt — and perhaps we could have discovered more and changed more. As it was, I stuck in more or less inhibited knots of suppressed aggression. On the whole, we've tended to tacitly avoid exercises where anger, noise, shouts and energy were released.

The gentleness with each other which was necessary at the beginning is now being experienced more often as a rather timid over-politeness, which cramps initiative and allows inertia to rule.

Marion: 'I often feel we control our irritations with each other — given a year together we should trust each other enough not to interpret criticism as a personal attack.'

Some of the friction arose from an inhibiting uncertainty about the unresolved question of leadership responsibility.

Pat: 'The way people suggest things always sounds — at least my voice always sounds — as if they're trying to be as tentative as possible, swallowing their voices. There's never an air of dynamism when we arrive — it's always as if everyone's totally weighed down.' Each of us was unsure where responsibility lay, how much of it to take, how much to urge others into doing exercises they showed reluctance to, etc.

Pat: 'When people's voices trail off at the end it's very difficult to be enthusiastic. You make this half-suggestion about trying something, so nobody responds, so you feel it was a completely pathetic suggestion . . .' And all of this in a group where we all want each other to be able to feel, and be, as strong and forceful as possible!



## Leading In Turn

As well as the uncertainty, there was an inequality in our experience and confidence. When we began, I'd had the most contact with the ways and means of therapy, since I'd done it for a year with a rather skilful and inventive (though sexist) therapist. I took an interest in the subject, read a bit, and collected techniques for use in the group. However, though I got a great deal out of sharing this and feeling helpful, as I've said, I did begin to feel trapped in the role. I began to resent what I saw as the other women's passivity — a simplistic view in fact, since the real picture was more complex than that. People were developing their confidence and experience in their own ways; my resentment was often demoralising for everyone. Quite early on I suggested we all got to a





professionally led group to gain knowledge, but since only three of us did, that didn't solve the problem, which now we're grappling with anew.

Pat describes her lack of confidence: 'I find it very difficult to get any farther than listening, reassuring, giving security — I've no focus to use as a guide for suggesting things.'

Annie: 'A lot of us have never overcome our ignorance of what methods actually exist, it never occurs to us to go off and read this or that.'

Partly as a result of a discussion for this article, we've decided that each woman in turn will formally lead the group. This means doing some 'home-work', working out methods, and dealing with the evening in her particular way, developing her own leadership skills and angles. We also agreed to break out of the straitjacket of endless verbalising and loosen ourselves up with physical, noise-making exercises or massage in every session. After the first and second of these reformed meetings, led by Liz, then Marion, I can only say that our inhibition with each other was greatly dispersed — apprehensiveness had given way to a sparkling expectancy. It was like a Magical Mystery Tour again.

## What's Wanted

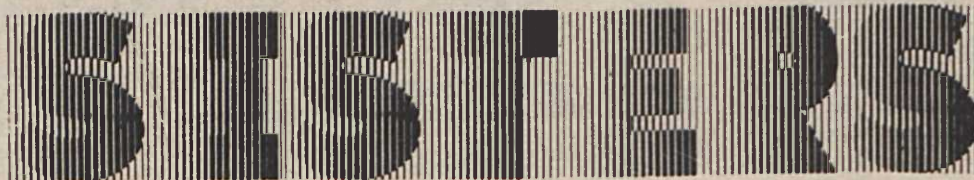
To get a wider perspective on the use of such a group, it's interesting to look back at some of the needs we didn't meet — the people who passed through, friends or local women who were sent to us. A young student who'd been anorexic for a couple of years came and seemed to be getting a lot out of being with us, but perhaps she became fearful or alienated by our feminism, our cohesiveness, I don't know: numerous phone calls failed to get a response, and she didn't come back. Another woman who joined for a while found it rather heavy going, too 'help' orientated and not light-hearted enough; she wanted to do more role-exploring things, like changing into each other's clothes, or dressing up in the sort of feminine gear we wore as teenagers, acting things out etc. We failed to integrate this, and she left, while retaining her individual friendships with us. Annie had a friend she encouraged to join — she'd moved to London from Belfast and lived in the outer suburbs with a young family. She struggled with awful fears — in the supermarket she'd be almost certain that either the British Secret Service or the IRA were after her, trailing her among the grocery shelves. In the end, fear of antagonising her husband and anxiety about travelling alone precluded her coming.

After the group, two of us had a meeting with the wife of someone we knew locally. Since she seemed to be in a very bad way we talked for hours and hours trying to sort out merely what to do about her overwhelming material problems — housing, money and custody struggles. But her dissociation from us, herself, and everything around her was so extreme that we got nowhere. We felt she would need a very caring, emotionally nourishing environment for a long time to get back together. We heard that she was later sectioned, but only for a short period.

A question often asked about self-help groups is — can they ever really be an alternative for large numbers of people? In the case of therapy, we would answer that it's hardly a question of *alternatives* — the NHS provides nothing in the first place. Unless you count the services of some 50 psychotherapists for upwards of 50 million souls.

Just as the conditions of everyday life make therapy groups necessary — a matter of life and death for some people — so does the appalling lack of public, free, progressive provision make self-help necessary. The existence of our group is a living criticism of that lack, and of a system pitted with such inhuman oversights. □

*To preserve anonymity, the names in this article have been changed.*



If you are an engineering staff worker

## JOIN TASS

The staff section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers  
If you oppose sex discrimination in jobs, in pay, in opportunity

## JOIN TASS

Don't let the employers organise you out of equal pay  
and equal opportunities. Legislation will not be enough.

## YOU NEED ORGANISATION NEGOTIATION

As well as legislation.

Write for application, or organise a meeting.

Contact: Judith Hunt, National Womens Officer, Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section, Onslow Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey.





# NEWS



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

Some of the 600 workers from Tate & Lyle, a Merseyside factory threatened with closure, who stopped work for the day on May 26 to join the massive demonstration against unemployment.

There were marches and rallies in every big town to protest against wage restraint, redundancies and public spending cuts. In Liverpool and London at least the rallies were pretty depressing — people drifted away as trade union officials and a few MPs made familiar speeches. But the turnout was fantastic.

## EQUAL PAY: WHY FIGHT FOR IT? YOU'VE GOT IT!

The pay guidelines for 1976-77, which Healey boasts will achieve lower pay increases than in any other European country, don't mention equal pay as an exception.

And on the day after reaching an agreement with the TUC General Council, Healey said: "We do not on this occasion have to provide for large equal pay increases outside the pay limit, which in the current year have added appreciably to the pay bill."

Some people assumed this meant equal pay had been scrapped. But if an individual can prove she is not getting equal pay within the narrow definition of the law — for doing the same or "broadly similar" work to a man to whom she can be compared (and the tribunals are interpreting this very rigidly), then the increase will have to be granted. The Equal Pay Act is law, and the government wouldn't risk further legislation to change it.

But the government and TUC are pretending the "problem" no longer exists. "I can't imagine why there are equal pay strikes," said a man at the DoE. "Everybody already has equal pay. It's an Act of Parliament you see." So no special provisions are necessary. So Healey isn't budgeting for equal pay increases.

Freak cases can go to industrial tribunals, "the proper machinery". As far as we know, industrial action for equal pay is still possible. Jo Richardson and the NCCL are putting questions to Healey to find out exactly what he meant.

But "voluntary" incomes policies are a matter of "good will": it will be considered "bad faith" to push for real equal pay. Ethel Chipchase of the TUC said: "This is the same as the previous agreement if it's a question of honest movement towards equal pay. But people can't manipulate the rules."

So wider definitions of equal pay, and moves towards equal earnings will definitely be discouraged. If this policy is accepted, women will be expected to remain the bulk of the low paid. Especially as officially these are no longer "women's rates", just lousy rates. □

Jill Nicholls

More on this next month.





## DONNE-NON SMETTERE DI LOTTARE! TUTTA LA VITA DEVE CAMBIARE!

"Women don't stop struggling The whole of life must change"<sup>1</sup>

50,000 women marched through Rome on April 3, demanding repeal of the "Legge Reale", the abortion laws dating from Mussolini. Amanda Sebestyen reports on sisterhood in Italy.

It's hard for us to imagine a situation where the government might fall over abortion, but that is what has happened in Italy. When a general election was announced for June 20, the abortion bill was shelved, but it's bound to be one of the first issues the new government will have to deal with.

A common slogan on walls and demonstrations at the moment is: "Si Si Si Si Abortiamo la DC" ("We'll abort the Christian Democrats")

The consciousness of women's present power infuses all the other struggles against higher prices, homelessness, CIA interference and Italy's comic-opera ruling class

**"NO for a healthy family"**  
The autonomous women's movement made its first great show of strength on 6 December 1975 with an abortion march of 30,000. This was emphatically a women's march, and set a precedent for the future.

The turnout astonished everyone, especially as the Communist Party women's organisation (Unione Donne Italiane) had stayed away from the march because Party deputies were negotiating a compromise law in Parliament.

UDI has about 20,000 members, with groups all over Italy. Up till now they have concentrated mainly on combatting price rises. The level of their feminism could be seen from their posters about the divorce referendum in 1974 — "Vote NO for a healthy family", i.e. against repeal of the new divorce laws. The bizarre reasoning behind this slogan was that if divorce is unobtainable, the family is undermined by couples living in sin!

But this April, UDI decided to take part in the abortion march, while the men in the PCI were still negotiating a "moderate" abortion law not only with the Christian Democrats but also with the Italian neo-fascists. So women in the Party have been the first to break with the leadership's Parliamentary compromises.

### Women Only

For some years the development of feminism lagged behind other revolutionary movements in Catholic countries. The size and strength of the Italian left has contributed to the confidence of the women's movement in Italy. So it's interesting that Italian revolutionary feminists never hesitated over excluding men from their centres and demonstrations. Far from deterring other women, this decision has drawn large numbers into the movement.

Local groups are springing up, based on consciousness-raising and action, especially around abortion. Groups known as CRAC — which differs from the more publicised CISA (linked with the Radical Party)

in that it consists only of women and works only in small groups — do contraception and abortion counselling and also carry out abortions.

All of this is of course outlawed by the Catholic hierarchy, whose anti-feminism was seen clearly during the divorce referendum. Starting from their stated class positions as left or right wing, both sides of the divorce controversy ended by opening up the whole area of sexual politics for discussion.

Whereas English conservatives often argue that easier divorce threatens the position of the wife, their Italian counterparts posed it as a threat to the power of husbands and the church. For example, Fanfani, an extreme rightist, claimed that women would use the new divorce laws to leave their husbands and live with each other — a much clearer acknowledgement than you would hear in Britain that it's not choice that keeps women inside the family.

### "Radical Frigidity"

Italian feminist struggles against the family emphasise sexuality. The earliest women's groups, "Rivolta Femminile" and "Demao", saw as their most important task the decolonisation of women's sexual power.

Each group took a clearly defined position. Rivolta's was that autonomous female sexuality is centred on the clitoris, freeing the woman from reproduction and from a learned response to male definitions of pleasure. Demao saw the central problem not as clitoral versus vaginal orgasm but as a "radical frigidity", the

"Non siamo macchine per la riproduzione, ma donne in lotta per la liberazione" ("We aren't machines for reproduction, but women in struggle for liberation") — banner on the massive women's march in Rome on April 3.

loss of women's sense of sexual direction.

Of abortion they said, "We do not want to be forced to abort any longer," seeing the alternative to abortion not only as more or better contraception, but as women defining their own sexual needs against patriarchal and reproductive norms.

### Sweat-shirt and Jeans

Women's revolt is strong in all areas of the culture. One of the many women's art exhibitions that has travelled round the country, beyond the main art centres, is called "Magma" — volcanic lava.<sup>2</sup>

Three or four years ago middle and upper class Italian women seemed the most laquered and enameled in Europe. But now women are putting less work into their appearance. In reports of the 1973 trial of Lola Pierobon, a factory worker who had an abortion at the age of 17 and was prosecuted six years later, much comment was made on Lola's "unheard-of appearance. No little 'signorina' in her Sunday best trying meekly to appeal to the good 'per bene' judges, she faces them in a sweat-shirt and jeans, which alone are enough in Italy to proclaim a new and independent way of life."<sup>3</sup>

1. "Women don't stop struggling — the whole of life must change." I saw this on a banner carried by a group of middle-aged working class housewives on a march against the rising cost of living called by "Lotta Continua". Considered the farthest left of the larger 'extraparlimentary' groups (membership about 30,000), they've had internal struggles lately over their attitude to women (for a full account, see *Fighting for Feminism, a Big Flame women's group pamphlet* available for 10p + postage from 79c Annerly Rd, London SE21).

2. For a full account of Magma and the work of other Italian women artists, see *Studio International*, March 1976.

3. Described by Edith Schloss in *Feminist Revolution by Redstockings* (available for £1.75 + postage from the *Women's Liberation Workshop*, 38 Earlham St, London WC2 and *Compendium*, 240 Camden High St, London NW1).



## FLYING OBJECTS

The Women's Free Arts Alliance has set up a centre near London's Regents Park to provide women with a place for "self-expression outside the context of home, family and job".

The WFAA seems less concerned with the politics of women's art — what is made, how and for whom — than with the therapeutic possibilities of art and the practical problems of getting down to it.

They've got grants for equipment from the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Greater London Arts Council and the Community Arts Panel of the Arts Council, who were no doubt impressed by the WFAA's petition signed by nearly 1,000 women from the Regents Park Estate and local squats, saying how much a women's centre was needed in the area — a

place where they could meet, run health groups and a food co-op, with facilities for painting and pottery.

The problem is whether the WFAA can really meet the needs of women on the estate.

Their main project now is *Womanschool*, a series of workshops on such subjects as video, weaving and yoga. The workshops, which they hope will be small and non-competitive, cost from 30p to £1 a course.

The WFAA also houses a gallery, which opened in March with an exhibition of crafts. In June, to coincide with the Regents Park Festival, they're showing *Green Things and Flying Objects*, images of the park now and as it could be in the future.

With the Women's Inter-Arts Centre in New York, the WFAA is sponsoring an exchange programme for artists and students.

The WFAA is the first of its kind in this country, so there's great pressure on it to become a national as well as a local centre. □

Contact them at 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1 (01-935 1841).



## Back to the Closet

For months a group of lesbians has been meeting in Middlesbrough's Newport Settlement, a building financed by the Cleveland Education Authority.

On 3 May the warden of the Settlement announced that he had received four complaints about the presence of the lesbian group from other users of the building. What they objected to was the use of the name "lesbian" in advertising the group on local radio.

Unknown to any of the women involved, the matter had subsequently been raised at a meeting of the Newport Settlement Management Committee, who had agreed unanimously to forbid the group to use the premises again. The warden explained that it was entirely within the constitution of the Settlement to expel a group without giving them any right of representation.

When questioned he agreed that the group had never been any trouble. Despite this and the fact that 1,596 other weekly users of the building had made no complaint about the group's presence, the warden insisted that the committee's decision must stand.

The women involved deplore the discrimination shown against them and resist totally any suggestion that their presence was at all harmful. The autocratic way in which the matter was conducted highlights yet again the fear and ignorance that continue to cloak the fact of lesbianism. □

Contact Middlesbrough Lesbians c/o 38 St Leonards Rd, Hutton Lowcross, Guisborough, Cleveland TS14 8BU.

## SMILE...



## or you're sacked

How the *Mirror* saw the story — "Yesterday Andrea was all smiles again... Her pal Dawn was beaming at the end of the case too..."

Assistants at the Subway Boutique, Wolverhampton, had orders from above to smile non-stop.

When 17-year-old Dawn Spiers was spotted without a smile on her face, manageress Joy Church warned her: "Smile, or you'll have to go." Dawn Spiers replied: "I can't keep smiling all day."

That protest cost her the job. And that started a row between Joy Church and Andrea Swift, 18-year-old assistant manageress.

According to the *Daily Mirror*, Andrea Swift said later: "Everyone working in the shop had to smile, even if we had no customers. It was very difficult to keep smiling all the time, and I thought it was disgraceful that Dawn should lose her job for such a reason."

But when she said so, she was accused of causing a "bad atmosphere" in the shop — so she walked out.

An industrial tribunal in Birmingham ruled that she was entitled to leave and awarded her £135 compensation for the loss of her job (though it didn't suggest compensation for all the smiles she'd provided free).

Dawn Spiers hadn't been working at the shop long enough to claim compensation. But she supported Andrea Swift as a witness. □

Jill Nicholls



On Saturday 8 May twenty women from Essex Road Women's Centre, London, picketed the pub where the Miss Islington Contest — a sexist spectacle put on by the *Islington Gazette* — was being judged.

The protestors sang women's songs, leafleted, and discussed with local people the unglamorous truths of women's everyday lives — the roles they are forced into as 24-hour cooks, cleaners and child-rearers, as low-paid workers, as battered wives. □



Black women in South Africa are among the most oppressed in the world. And the over-riding cause of their oppression is the apartheid system.

They suffer from all the forms of discrimination and powerlessness that come from being at the bottom of the heap. Moreover, under South African legislation black women are denied basic human rights such as the right to live with their husbands and provide a normal family life for their children.

FOR THEIR TRIUMPHS AND FOR THEIR TEARS by Hilda Bernstein shows how women have suffered from the cruelties imposed by the apartheid system — and how they have resisted.

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BY HILDA BERNSTEIN



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# NEWS

## MURDER BY INSTALMENT Ulrike Meinhof

"Nobody is able to stand what is being done to us. And I can't either. It is only a question of how long I can stand it and still do something."



LIBERATION

Ulrike Meinhof, arrested in 1972 for urban guerilla operations, was found hanged in her cell on May 9. By speaking out about her psychological torture, she had broken the conspiracy of silence in West Germany about increasing state violence against all liberation movements.

It will have to be clarified whether Ulrike Meinhof was killed or killed herself; at the moment we can only speculate.

But there are enough facts to mention about her life, which is in many ways typical of the struggle against oppression in post-war Germany. Her biography is outstanding in two respects: that she was conscious of fighting as a woman and that as one of the few radical journalists she made other people think and understand more clearly and encouraged them to act. Above all she herself acted according to her own insights when she finally gave up the role of radical onlooker

and decided to become an urban guerilla.

### Roots of Non-Violence

Ulrike Meinhof was born in Oldenburg in 1934. Coming from an anti-fascist background, she got involved in the first post-war mass movement against re-armament and nuclear warfare. Her politics were radical pacifist, and she joined the then illegalized Communist Party.

She married Klaus Rainer Roehl with whom she edited the glossy leftist magazine *konkret* for the next ten years. Her regular political column in *konkret* became a reference

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any time  
for  
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Bill, 14 Sloansway, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 1NB. T: Welwyn Garden City 20001  
Maggie, 9 Cromwell Place, Newbury, Berks. T: Newbury 43719



point of radical thought, especially among young people. As brilliant, enraged and beautiful female journalist she was made the pet of trendy left circles in the liberal 60s.

When the student revolt spread from the universities into the streets, fighting against media manipulation and the war in Vietnam, she became more radical. Later she wrote: "The shots on Rudi Dutschke [Easter 1968] hit the roots of non-violence. If you don't resist, you'll die. If you don't die, you'll be jailed for life in prisons, remand homes, suburbia."

After separating from her husband she still wrote for *konkret*, concentrating on issues of the students' revolt, mainly education, anti-authoritarian nurseries, children's homes and hostels. She did research into the situation of "delinquents" in care, and got increasingly involved in this part of the youth movement.

Finally she made a film, *Bambule*, about a riot in a remand home for women. This was banned from German TV screens. In May 1970 she helped free Andreas Baader from prison and quit legality.

**Haiphong and Heidelberg**  
After a short stay in Palestine, she and her comrades began to work as the Red Army Faction (RAF), an urban guerilla group. Part of their politics was to analyse imperialist strategies and criticise left groups for their theoretical and practical half-heartedness.

RAF's most spectacular action was the bombing of the US headquarters in Heidelberg and Frankfurt in May 1972, after the destruction of Haiphong harbour — the computer for US operations in Vietnam was stationed in Heidelberg.

Soon afterwards most RAF members were captured in the course of an amazing woman-hunt in which thousands of people were involved. Ulrike Meinhof was arrested in June 1972.

## Urinating One's Soul

Since then the government, the Federal Prosecution, the police, the judiciary, and of course Axel Springer's gutter press, have joined their growing forces to isolate and silence the prisoners of this and other left-wing groups.

Ulrike Meinhof was kept almost one year under sensory deprivation in the "Silent Wing" of Ossendorf prison near Cologne, and for the next three years in strict solitary confinement. She describes the effects of her conditions in the "Silent Wing":

*"The feeling that one's head is going to explode, The feeling, the spinal cord would be forced into the brain, The feeling, the brain would slowly shrink together, like dried fruit, for instance, The feeling, one was uninterruptedly, imperceptibly exposed to electrification, one was remotely controlled, The feeling one urinated the soul from one's body, as if one could not hold the urine..."* and later:

*"Raging aggression, for which there is no valve. That is the worst. Clear consciousness that one has no chance to survive, utter failure to communicate that.*

*Visits leave no impression. Half an hour after the event one can only mechanically reconstruct whether the visit took place today or last week. Nobody, apart from oneself, is in the same exceptional condition."*

This stark testimony had to be smuggled out of prison. It

was the first time people heard about the clean and deadly methods of torture applied to prisoners still awaiting their trial. Sensory deprivation, isolation, inappropriate medical care had so far only been connected with the treatment of alleged IRA members in Northern Ireland after the introduction of internment in 1971.

To protest against their conditions, Ulrike Meinhof and 40 other prisoners went on hunger strike in September 1974. RAF prisoner Holger Meins was starved to death while being forcefed.

At the same time Meinhof was threatened with brain surgery to prove that madness was the reason for her politics.

## Clamping Down

As well as building a £3 million fortress-courthouse at Stammheim near Stuttgart especially for the trial of the remaining four RAF defendants, the government passed a battery of new repressive laws. One restricted lawyers' rights to defend clients in court.

This is happening in a

general atmosphere of intimidation. People thought to have left-wing views can no longer be civil servants, teachers, social workers or employees of nationalised industries (e.g. train drivers). Immigrant workers are watched by the political police. The fight for free abortion has led to raids on women's centres, arrests and charges under the conspiracy law.

Ulrike Meinhof died at an important turning point of the Stuttgart trial which started a year ago. The RAF prisoners had just accepted responsibility for the bombing of the US headquarters. This meant that political discussion could start on what they had done and why — on the role of US bases in Europe and the involvement of their host countries in imperialist wars.

The many solidarity addresses and actions from revolutionary groups and individuals mourn the death of an outstanding fighter who died in the struggle against oppression. □

Karin Monte  
Contact the Campaign Against Repression in West Germany,  
35 Wellington St, London WC2.

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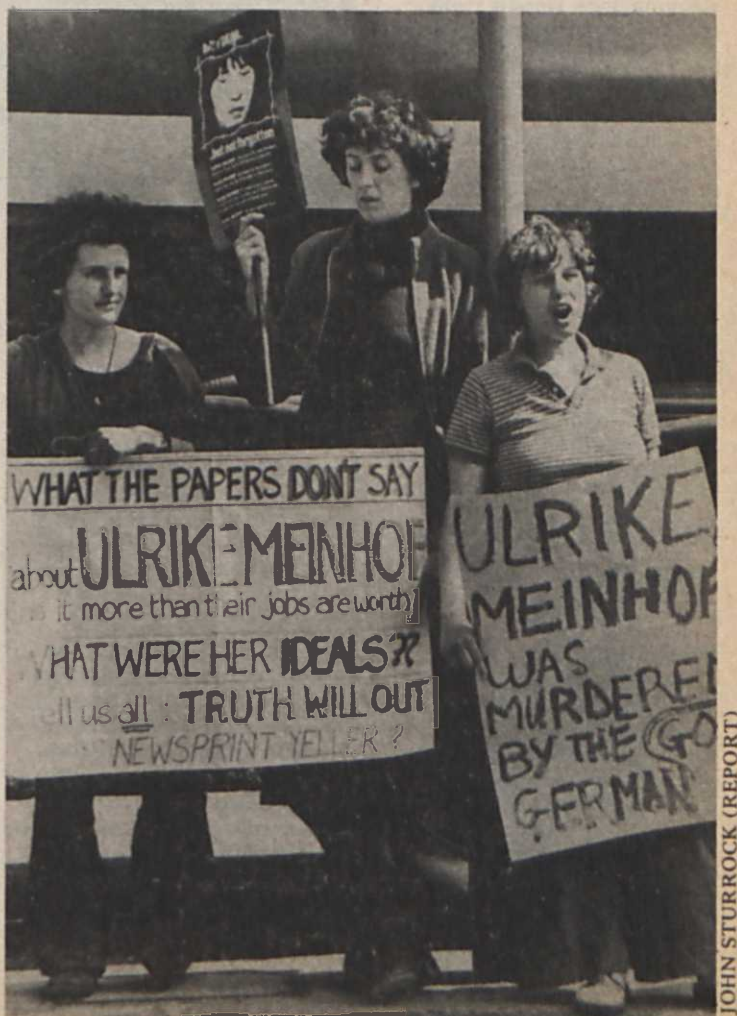
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Protesting outside the West German Embassy on May 14

JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)



# SHORTLIST

Please send information to Anny Brackx, Shortlist Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St., London W1A 4XS.

## events

Events are listed chronologically

### Wages for Housework?

A seven week course of lectures of which there are three to go. The case for and against has already been presented. The topic for June 17 is 'Money and sexuality'; on June 24: 'State legislation and dependence of women' and on July 1: 'Should a wife be paid a wage for her valuable services to the family?' The lectures start at 10am and end at 12 noon. Contact Hazel Jones (01-202 6545 x2) for details.

### Abortion 1890-1914

Angus McLaren, Canadian professor of history will lecture on 'Abortion in England, 1890-1914' on June 18, 7.30pm at the Women's Research and Resources Centre, 158 North Gower St, London NW1 (01-388 0882 Tuesdays and Thursdays).

### Women & Spirituality

A conference organised by the Student Christian Movement for June 18-20. Monica Sjoog and Una Kroll are among the speakers. Admission £8 and £6 for students. This includes food and accommodation (bring a sleeping bag). Details from SCM, Tatlow Centre, Wick Ct, Wick, nr. Bristol (Abson 3377).

### Women & Health Conference

The planning meeting for the 2nd National Women & Health Conference (Manchester Oct 2/3) will be on June 19. Contact Shirley, 194 Brunswick Rd, Sheffield or telephone Liz, Jenny or Debbie (0742-331304) for time and place.

### No Place to Play?

The lack of spaces and facilities for play is the theme of Play-day '76 on June 19. Local and national organisations concerned with children will put on festivals, meetings, exhibitions to draw the attention of local authorities. Contact John Roberts, Fair Play for Children Campaign, 237 Pentonville Rd, London N1 (01-278 5314) for help.

### Women and Non-Violent Change

There will be a London planning weekend on June 25/26 for an international gathering this summer (July 13-18) in France, of women involved in working for non-violent social change as well as for women's liberation. The cost will be £2 all-inclusive (also creche). Further information about the international or London meetings from Jo or Gay, 75 Heald Place, Rusholme, Manchester 14 (061-248 6348).

### Sexual Roles Workshop

"Mixed group, women and men. An endeavour to be more fully aware of our feelings as men and women and of the influence on us of stereotypes and expectations." On June 26/27. Contact Jean at 172 Yorkshire St, Rochdale (0706-40847).

### Gay Teachers

An open discussion will take place on June 30, organised by the London Gay Teachers Group at the University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1, starting at 7.30pm.

### East London History

From June 30 to July 2 there will be an East London History Workshop, covering topics like the women of Hoxton, home-life in Hackney between the

### International Lesbian Conference

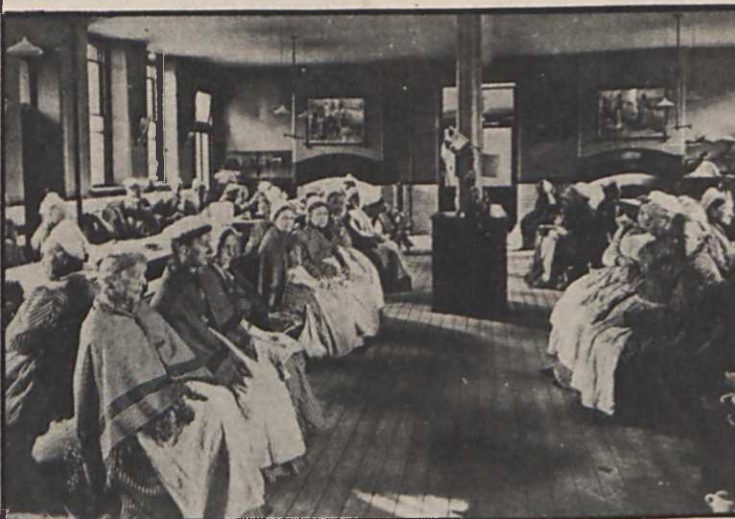
Write to GLF Glife, 7 Rue des Preuvaires, Paris 75001, France if you feel like taking part in this conference on the first weekend in July.

### Communist University

From July 10 to 18 at the University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1. Apart from an introductory course on Marxism, there are courses on health and social care, the family, women and revolution, as well as economics, education, history, law, philosophy... The registration fee is £5.50. Contact the Education Department of the Communist Party, 16 King St, London WC2 (01-836 2151).

### Family Planning

'Male hegemony & family



Hackney Workhouse around 1905. From 'If it wasn't for the houses in between...', a collection of social and historical documents about Hackney

wars, the early years of Ford's Dagenham, the East End underworld, music halls and more. At Hoxton Music Hall, Hoxton St, London N1. Tickets range from £3 to 25p according to your status and geographical location. You can get them from Jerry White, 65a Casimir Rd, London E5.

### Abortion Disco

The National Abortion Campaign is holding a fundraising disco on July 3 at 8pm in the basement, 29 Shelton St, London WC2. Entrance 50p.

### Gingerbread

One Parent Families demonstration on Saturday July 3. Rally at Speaker's Corner at midday followed by a march down Oxford St to Trafalgar Square where things will burst into a children's festival. Tess Woodcraft (01-734 9014) will tell you more.

planning'. This WRRRC seminar will be introduced by Helen Roberts from the Family Planning Research Unit of Exeter University. On July 16, starting 7.30pm at the WRRRC, see above.

### Smoking in Pregnancy

Another WRRRC seminar with speaker Hilary Graham (Research Fellow at York University) on July 30 starting 7.30 at WRRRC as above.

## campaigns

### Abortion

The National Abortion Campaign and A Woman's Right To Choose are planning a school for this summer to discuss future legislation on the basis of abortion on demand. NAC is also collecting evidence in favour of better abortion

facilities. This will be made public and discussed at a national tribunal to be held in the autumn. Send your evidence (individual or from an organisation) to NAC, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1 (01-485 4303).

Lancaster Abortion Campaign is collecting information on the local situation. They welcome personal accounts of women's experiences in trying to get an abortion. Contact NAC, c/o The Plough, Moor Lane, Lancaster (0524-66904).

Whose Choice is a new film by the London Women's Film Group. It is a combination of drama and documentary material, structured around a young girl's attempts to get an abortion, the choices open to her and the fears and fantasies which inform her decision. The film provides information on birth control and abortion, explores prevailing attitudes and presents an argument for 'a woman's right to choose'. It is 40 minutes long, in colour, and can be hired from The Other Cinema, 12/13 Little Newport St, London WC2 (01-734 8508).

The Baby Factory is a ten minute play, for a cast of six to ten people, on abortion and women's conditioning. It is written by Berta Freistadt and she would like women's groups to use it. 30p from 62 De Vere Gardens, Ilford, Essex.

Islington Abortion Campaign have produced an Abortion Comic for use in schools, health groups, etc. for age 14 upwards. It contains three stories and information, and costs 12p for one; 35p for five; 55p for ten. From Islington NAC, c/o Essex Rd Women's Centre, 108 Essex Rd, London N1.

### Gay Workers

The contact phone number for Gay Social Workers & Probation Officers has changed to Claire (01-998 9653).

## centres

### Exeter Women's Aid Refuge

"12 women and 18 children have stayed for various periods, while several other women have telephoned or come in for a talk. We would like to encourage this." They still need some furniture and helpers (0392-52486).

### East London Gay Centre

Open now at 19 Redmans Rd, London E1, near Whitechapel tube (01-790 2454) between 8 and 11pm. "It should provide a friendly non-exploitative environment in which we can gain strength and solidarity, and should be a nucleus for political activity directed against oppression." The centre



is running a food coop and is creating a gay presence in East London through posters, street theatre and stalls in local markets. All are welcome to the weekly Sunday meetings at 8pm.

**Wages for Housework Centre**  
The London Wages for Housework Campaign invite all women to their 'Open House' every Wednesday, starting at 7.30 at the Centre, 128 Drummond St, London NW1 (01-459 1150, 01-387 3550).

## projects

### Women Squatters

Are you looking for a squat/up to your eyeballs in it? Do you want to know what other women squatters are up to? How they cope with local councils? Do you want to learn/teach a skill? Come to the fortnightly Monday meetings at 38 Earlham St, London WC2 (01-836 6081).

### Rustic Gays

GRAIN (Gay Rural Aid & Information Network) addresses itself to gay women into self-sufficiency and also to those into crafts in urban areas. Write to Avril & Angela, 50 Riverview Grove, Chiswick, London W4 3QP if you want to know more.

## services

### Lesbian Information

For women who have problems or are confused about their sexuality, or just want to know what is going on. Every Wednesday from 6-8pm at the Women's Centre, 76 Brighton Rd, Birmingham 12 (021-449 2931). A women's liberation oriented lesbian group for gay or bisexual women also meets at the centre on alternate Wednesdays from 8pm onward.

### Women's Work Register

You are stuck; swamped by work; want something done quickly. Women can do it for you. Ring (01-836 6081) and ask for the Women's Work Register.

### Women's Rights Groups

Next month Shortlist will carry a list of women's groups investigating the equal pay and sex discrimination situation. If you know of one or are involved in one, please let us know.

## plays

### Gay Sweatshop

Stone is a new play by Edward



Bond written specially for Gay Sweatshop. Bond describes it as more of a parable than a play. It is funny and entertaining, contains songs and dance as well as sensuous theatrical imagery. It will be performed until June 26, Tuesday to Saturday at 1.15pm, at the ICA, Nash House, 12 Carlton House Terrace, London SE1 (01-839 5344).

## art

### Women . . . Work in Hackney

Exhibition by the Hackney Flashers Collective. "The exhibition is a photographic documentation of a cross section of working women in Hackney — in factories, nurseries, canteens, parents . . . This is linked with current unequal pay statistics and it also shows how women are fighting back." It can be seen until July 4, from 11am-6pm, Monday-Saturday, at the Half Moon Gallery, 27 Alie St, London E1 (01-488 2595).

### The Women Artists Collective

Following the one and a half radio programme on women on Radio London in November we held an opening meeting for all women artists interested in trying to establish a cultural centre. Since then we have been given the space which will be used as an information centre and meeting place, and would like women to send slides and photographs of their work. We hope to build up a comprehensive slide collection covering work currently being done by women both here and abroad. In order to cover costs we are asking for a registration fee of £1 to be sent with slides/photographs. We welcome people prepared to help with the centre. Our office is on the top floor at 38 Earlham Street, London WC1. A phone will be installed soon.

## pamphlets

### 'Nestlé kills Babies'

was printed in Switzerland in 1974. The publishers were sued by Nestlé and the case is still dragging on. There is now an international campaign exposing the baby foods racket. *Bottle Babies, a Guide to the Baby Foods Issue* gives an overview of the campaign. Quoting scientists, it stresses the importance of breastfeeding especially in underdeveloped countries, where bottlefeeding, despite its lower protein value, has become a status symbol. "Breast milk is the original convenience food. No mixing or sterilising

needed; no dirty pots and bottles to wash up afterwards, always on tap from its specially designed unbreakable containers. And it is genuinely the most nutritious wholesome product on the market." The pamphlet exposes high pressure advertising and distribution of milk formulae by commercial companies in developing countries as "one of the major factors in changing the pattern of infant feeding and in the consequent increased emphasis in mortality and morbidity in the early months and first year of life." *Bottle Babies, a Guide to the Baby Foods Issue*, by Jane Cottingham, is available at \$3 from CCPD, World Council of Churches, 150 Route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

### Non-Sexist Code of Practice for Book Publishing

Prepared by the Women in the Publishing Industry Group, the code was voted as official NUJ policy at its Annual Delegate Meeting. "People working in all areas of the media have a responsibility to act against oppressive stereotyping of men and women." The code offers a series of guidelines for workers in the publishing industry. It tries to shape an awareness of sexism and its deep-rooted assumptions and is summed up in six points: 1. Don't make women invisible (e.g. with words like 'mankind'); 2. Stop character, 3. vocational, 4. social, and 5. sexual stereotyping; 6. Stop demeaning women.

I only wish I could mix it in with the breakfast cereals of all publishers and journalists. Buy it, read it, pass it round. *Non-Sexist Code of Practice for Book Publishing*, 10p each + sae, from Women in the Publishing Industry, c/o 19 Novello St, London SW6.

### Scottish Women's Liberation Conference

A report of the Scottish conference is being compiled by Chris Aldred and Fiona Forsyth. Copies from Nether Tullock, Old Meldrum, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire AB5 0AX.

### Leeds Pregnancy Handbook

An inexpensive (20p) comprehensive pamphlet about pregnancy and childbirth. Although the usefulness of descriptions and addresses of particular Leeds hospitals, and other organisations, is limited to women living locally, the pages of general information are good value for any pregnant woman and her supporters. The pamphlet covers the signs of pregnancy, ante-natal care and preparation, the ins and outs of financial and other entitlements from the state (maternity grant, free pres-

criptions), the pros and cons of home and hospital confinements, the mechanics of labour and birth, infant feeding choices, the post-natal period.

The pamphlet is accurate, clear, well laid out and illustrated, although the illustrations of hospital confinements are rather daunting (many



From Leeds Pregnancy Handbook

women do, even must, have their babies in hospital and need a realistic but positive approach to that). A reading list is also provided. So much better than all the booklets the professionals give you. Hopefully the Leeds women will distribute it at ante-natal clinics. *Leeds Pregnancy Handbook*, 20p each, from Harehills Housing Aid Centre, 188 Roundhay Rd, Leeds 8 (0532-629365).

Nadine Cartner

## journals & articles

### Fighting Woman News

This Newsheet for women who are into "martial arts, self-defence and combative sports" is consistently boring and displays a questionable feminism. Well, it's about tournament fighting, losses and gains, the 'belt business' and it sometimes smells of speedy back-page sports journalism: "Fay Shreibman decided not to defend the title she had earned by wiping out Oklahoman Beth Bussey . . ." Why mention it? Maybe, because we need a better version here, for women who are into self defence with or without belt. *Fighting Woman News*, 50¢ each, from 9 East 48th St, New York, NY 10017.



From Fighting Women News



## FARMWORKERS FIGHT DOWNGRADING

On 3 May an industrial tribunal in Ashford, Kent, set a precedent which should help thousands of women agricultural workers in their fight for true equal pay.

Under the Sex Discrimination Act, Scott and Knowles, fruit farmers of Canterbury, were found to have discriminated against three of their women employees by lowering their hours and rate of pay but not those of the men.

The three women, Ann Harris (47), Kathleen Kidd (63) and Iris Morris (52), have worked for many years both for Scott and Knowles and for their predecessors, packing and grading fruit in the winter months and doing agricultural work on the farm in the summer. They had contracts of employment stating that they should work a 40 hour week. This they did until a letter put in their pay packets on 30 January changed things.

The letter said that owing to the increase in wages, their employers would be forced, as from 4 February, to put all full-time women on 30 hours a week, making them part-time casuals.

This came just ten days after the Agricultural Wages Order 1976 brought equal pay into effect for men and women doing similar work in agriculture.

### Equality Too Costly

Undoubtedly Scott and Knowles had faced "great increases in wages": agricultural workers nationally had just been granted a long overdue £6 increase, bringing their statutory minimum full-time wage to the grand sum of £36.50 a week, and with equal pay many farmers used to grossly underpaying women were noticing quite a difference in their wages bills.

Scott and Knowles answer to the problem was to discriminate against their women employees in the most blatantly obvious way. By lowering their hours they could change them from full-time to part-time casual, effectively cutting their

basic pay from £36.50 to £24 a week. The Agricultural Wages Board helped by introducing differential hourly rates when equal pay arrived: 91½p for over 30 hours a week and 80p for 30 hours and under. (80p is 87½% of 91½p. Before equal pay the female rate was 87½% of the male rate.)

So Ann, Kathleen and Iris approached their union, the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, who brought the action and represented them.

### Big Strong Men

At the tribunal the solicitor for Scott and Knowles made vain attempts to show that the women were doing totally different work to the men. He claimed, while cross-examining Ann Harris, that little intelligence was needed and that her job was mechanical and monotonous.

He then implied that the men were doing heavy manual work shifting great bulks of fruit weighing 600lb. Surely Ms Harris would agree that this was man's work, "not the sort of work you would expect women to do?" Ann replied that she wouldn't mind having a go — but no one had asked her!

It became obvious later that the men were not expected to lift 600lb, but that all the lifting was done with mechanical aids — a point the opposition forgot to mention. It was also suggested that because she couldn't drive a tractor she was in an inferior position. But she was willing to learn to drive a tractor if someone would show her how!

### Time Off to Nurse

The climax of the tribunal had to be the evidence presented by the employers in the person of self-styled "managing director" Mr John Scott.

He appeared to have no understanding of equality. He claimed there had been no sex discrimination, yet time and time again made statements contradicting this. He said all women were casual workers, they had time off to look after sick families — "men don't have time off to look after their wives."

The use of the term "full-time" in relation to these women was, he claimed, just his way of distinguishing them from his other women employees who worked less than 30 hours a week and not at all during the school holidays. It had no bearing on the term "full-time" as used by the Agricultural Wages Board! He glibly dismissed the contracts of employment held by the women — "the contract's ain't no good."

Before the tribunal he wrote: "On the introduction of equal pay we realised that the women in the packhouse could not do the same work as the men. We gave it a two week trial and had so much unrest with the male labour we had no alternative but to put all women on 30 hours per week."

The tribunal report commented: "The men obviously pushed him to treat the women less favourably — clearly the sexes were being set off one against the other."

### Low Rates for "Casuals"

The tribunal could only decide unanimously that discrimination had taken place. They recommended that the women return to a 40 hour week at the rate laid down by the Agricultural Wages Board, which in their opinion should be the full £36.50 paid previously. Compensation was awarded to cover

loss of wages for the weeks on lower pay.

The complicated structure of the industry which emerged at the tribunal highlighted the appalling conditions agricultural workers face — especially the women. The new Agricultural Wages Order for 1976 introduced a system of differentials between those employed on a regular or comparatively permanent basis and those regarded as casual — that is those who move around or work only when they want to. This has provided a loophole for farmers wanting to avoid equal pay.

Mr Scott wasn't clever enough to get away with it, though only three of the women concerned were prepared to come forward and fight this downgrading. And Scott owns seven other farms where similar notices were sent out.

Until the Agricultural Wages Board alter the new order most women will accept the situation and suffer.

### Fobbed Off With Perks

The NUAAW is fighting to change things. More tribunals are pending, so hopefully as more cases are heard more women will come forward. But this tends to be a slow process — most agricultural workers are in small units with no alternative employment, caught up in the feudal practice



Kathleen Kidd weeding the strawberry fields

MICHAEL ANN MULLEN



of tied cottages and so fearing confrontation with their employers. Not traditionally the most militant of workers, they are often fobbed off with the so-called perks of the job.

This tribunal decision, the new government bill to end tied cottages and the call from the recent NUAAW conference for a £60 minimum weekly wage within two years show that moves are being made in the right direction. The conference also condemned the Agricultural Wages Board's juggling of full and part-time rates, calling for a policy of equal hourly rates for all workers. But while the union can claim only 80,000 members, barely half the number of full-time agricultural workers, there is still a long way to go. □

Mandy Moore

## STOP PRESS

Ms Kidd, Morris and Harris have been put back on 40 hrs, but the employers have been trying to get them to sign contracts agreeing to accept 80p an hour, plus a £2 bonus and normal transport arrangements — the female workers are brought in from Canterbury by Scott and Knowles. Mr Scott is threatening to remove this transport 'concession' if the women hold out for the 91½p settled at the Tribunal, so that the women would face extra difficulty and expense in getting to work. Some of the male workers are also opposing the full rate for the women, as they say that men don't get free transport, so why should the women get the full rate and transport? However, all the women were quick to point out that the male workers either drive cars or live very near the farm.

In spite of this diehard opposition, in spite of the possibility that Scott and Knowles might welcome any opportunity to dismiss them, the women are holding out — supported by the union — against the new contracts and the employer's blackmail tactics.

Apples from the Scott and Knowles concern go to Tescos and Key Markets, as well as Covent Garden. Strawberries go straight to Smedleys in Faversham for canning. Perhaps Smedleys workers could help the women farmworkers show Mr Scott where the real power, not just the bluster, lies — with those who produce!



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

Women at Orlakes Plastics, a record-making factory in Dagenham, East London, are on strike for higher wages and union recognition.

They get 53p an hour — just over £13 gross for a 25-hour week. The few men in the factory earn a couple of pounds a week more.

Just before Easter the 103 women workers went on strike for a pay rise for themselves and the men. When the men were offered an extra 10p an hour, the women returned to work.

During that strike they joined the TGWU. They then had to strike *again* for union recognition — invoking the firm's "family spirit", the management cancelled a meeting agreed with the union and suspended three of the women.

Now their strike is official, and the men, much less militant, have had to stop work too. □

## Outworkers Organise

Glovemakers in Torrington, North Devon, have formed the first General and Municipal Workers' Union branch made up entirely of outworkers.

During the year since they joined, the women have won pay increases totalling 42½% — bringing them within 20% of the factory rate. Branch membership has increased, and they hope to achieve full parity with the factory workers.

The women work for three separate employers. Most had the advantage of being experienced in factory jobs and knew how much factory workers were paid. The driving force was Mary Thacker.

Encouraged by her husband, shop steward in a dairy, Mary approached the GMW. An employer helped by supplying

workers' names and addresses, and the first meeting was arranged. Mary became the first branch secretary and three shop stewards were elected.

### Rocking the Boat

What gains have they made? Mary Thacker said: "Money is a big thing, obviously. Now we have more contact — all the women are delighted with the way it has worked out. I was always reserved, but I have made so many friends and find I can talk to people more."

"It's been a case of learning as we went along. We knew nothing about unions when we started. We try to hold meetings in the afternoons so it's easier for those with young children. All our husbands are behind us, but there are still some women who refuse to

join. They're afraid of rocking the boat at home."

There are still grievances as they are not paid for Bank Holidays, nor do they receive anything towards the cost of electricity for heating, lighting and powering their sewing machines. □

Sylvia Courtnage

## Factory Food

At Tillotson's, a factory in Liverpool which makes cartons, the women have managed to organise a food co-op . . . in work time.

At the moment it deals only with meat, but it's cheap and saves time shopping after work. □



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## UNDER ATTACK

# NEWS

## PLAY IS WORK

Playgroups, which need fewer facilities and less qualified staff, are being taken up by the state as a cheap alternative to nurseries.

The Pre-School Playgroups Association is to get £161,000 p.a. from the DHSS.

Playgroups started about ten years ago in mainly middle class areas, with mothers working on a voluntary basis. Now, with increased demand, most are run by paid staff — often mothers trained on PPA courses.

In autumn 1974 some playgroup workers got together and joined NUPE, of which many childminders and nursery nurses were already members. In 1975 they formulated these demands for all playgroup workers, and tried to get them accepted into the Whitley Council Scale:

i) Wages — £50 for a 35 hour

week (pro rata for part-time);  
ii) Holidays — four weeks paid leave per year, half pay during school holidays if the play-group has to close;  
iii) Sick pay;  
iv) Training courses — attendance with pay.

The trade union side of the Whitley Council has accepted this, and in May it seems likely that the employers' side will soon — though it's not yet known at what point on the scale.

Only playgroups directly funded by the council would be obliged to pay these rates. But the Playgroup Workers Movement hope that workers in grant-aided or charity play-grounds will hear about the rate and demand it too. Contact the Playgroup Workers Movement at 18 Lanhill Rd, London W9 (01-286 9361).

Cleaners in schools on the borders of Scotland went on strike against an attempt to cut their hours and wages by 30%.

Instead of 22½ hours for a miserable £13.50, the Borders Regional Council tried to put them on 15 hours for £8.50.

After six weeks of strike action, in which some schools had to close, the council withdrew its proposals. □

### NEWS COPY DATES

Spare Rib 49 is on sale from July 14. News stories for that issue should reach us by June 18. It will help us to plan the section if you can let us know in advance what you want to write about and roughly how long it will be. For No.50 the news copydate is July 23. (If it's urgent, it's worth trying after these dates.)

1ST ISSUE

## At last — a no-nonsense newspaper for women!

● WE'RE NON-POLITICAL  
AND REPRESENT ALL  
CLASSES OF WOMEN

● WE DEMAND AND INTEND  
TO GET A MUCH FAIRER  
DEAL FOR WOMEN

● WE BELIEVE IN PLAIN  
SPEAKING — SO WATCH  
OUT!



## LADIES NOW HELP US TO HELP YOU!

The first issue of Brass Tacks is out — monthly newspaper of the National Housewives Association, a consumer group that claims 20,000 members. They say, "It's the only paper written by women for women." Forgetting of course their male editor.

It's interesting because it takes up the challenge of women's liberation, taking house-work seriously, appealing to a sense of pride and solidarity — "The real power of the land lies with US!"

But the National Housewives define themselves firmly as "not Women's Libbers". Chairman Sandra Brookes writes: "I'm different, and I'm delighted about it. I don't want to be liberated . . ." Then, significantly, "As Margaret Thatcher has demonstrated, if you've got the brains and ability, you can do anything you set your mind to, whatever your sex."

There's a letter of support from Margaret Thatcher. And an article by Sally Oppenheim, Conservative speaker on Prices and Consumer Protection.

The NHA claims proudly that it doesn't accept donations from industry. But on page 4 there's an article explaining how the corner grocer is on your side. It's written by Mace Supermarkets. Then there are two photos of the Fine Fare laboratories, and a caption telling us how much care they put into "the production of everything from a bottle of pop to a

can of beans!" On the same page there's a large advertisement for Fine Fare.

They say they're fighting inflation. They're certainly not fighting profits. The woman who interviews Anton Poote, head of multinational Philips, buys every word he says, and concludes: "But then maybe I am too susceptible to tall, handsome Dutchmen with that certain something in their eyes." The rest of the page is filled with an advert for, you've guessed it, Philips.

Brass Tacks teaches you how to complain. What you do is: "Before leaving home, take a long hard look at yourself in the mirror. Put on your prettiest outfit, your most seductive perfume . . ." When you get to the manager's office: "Admire the wallpaper, the carpet, the view, his tie, his shirt, anything to get him in the right mood." Then shoot him?

The paper, price 10p, is being funded by "a small amount of money given by a charitable trust" — donated on condition that the trust remains anonymous. Wonder why. □

Jill Nicholls and Jane Root



## SINDICATO DO SERVIÇO DOMÉSTICO

Having considered the case of our colleague, Alzira de Jesus Possa Pimenta, found guilty of infanticide by the Second Criminal Judiciary of Porto, we decided to make our conclusions public:

No one coldbloodedly kills an innocent child as a rational act. So we conclude that there were circumstances that led to the disturbance of Alzira's mental faculties. Among the causes we include:

- The man who "collaborated" with her.
- The unjust society which designates the woman as "weak" yet attributes responsibilities to her which should be the man's — the so-called "strong" as well. It refuses to recognise unmarried mothers, these heroines who have struggled with so many difficulties to face those who have humiliated them. Look at their children, who are marginalised and carry on their backs the scorn of stares.
- The lack of sexual education, especially for poor and humble people like Alzira.
- The marginality in which the domestic employee lives means she is easily deceived by the first person who says he loves her and wants to marry her. This is what Alzira believed.

Considering all this we ask:

- Who is going to compensate Alzira for all the ill-treatment she has received?
- Who condemns the man who fathered the son then abandoned it?
- Who condemns those who have killed and those who order others to kill in Spain, Angola and other parts of the world?
- Who condemns the acts of the "gentlemen" who make the laws?

Ah! but they are the "gentlemen" of "justice". Alzira, no! These and are right. Alzira, no! She is a criminal! And these "gentlemen" have money to pay for "justice". If gentlemen know how to explain themselves, but she confessed to her crime. Do not judge Alzira superficially but like us try to make a serious analysis. If you arrive at the same conclusions, unite with us in defence of so many Alziras who exist everywhere.

We are going to appeal to the tribunal to annul the sentence and to try Alzira under other conditions. For this we need the support and activity of all who don't accept the sentence.

Contact us: 1st Floor, 337 Rua de S. Benito, Lisbon.

## Against the 'GENTLEMEN OF JUSTICE' — PORTUGUESE CLEANERS UNITE

*"At the moment we are in the forefront of the struggle for women's rights in Portugal." Sophia Ganhao of the Domestic Workers' Union was speaking in London in March. "All our struggle is based in the fight for the rights of domestic workers, but as such it is also a struggle for the liberation of women."*

The MLM (Movimento Leracao Mulheres), the small middle class women's movement, were the first to take up the demands of women's liberation. But they were ridiculed and physically assaulted by thousands of men when they first demonstrated on the streets in January 1975.

Many working class women didn't see the relevance of feminist demands, mainly because they hadn't the economic security or social status to make such changes.

But in the two years following the coup, through organising equal pay strikes, occupations, tenants associations and nurseries, women achieved material changes in their lives which made it possible for them to start questioning their primary function as wives and mothers.

Because of the kind of work they'd always done — servicing their own families and those of the rich — now, as the whole idea of working for bosses was challenged, working class women began to question the nature of their work and the need for it, finding ways of socialising housework.

**Liberated Laundry**  
In the summer of 1974 there was a wave of occupations of

workplaces abandoned or threatened with closure by frightened owners. One that women took over was a laundry in Lisbon. They told *Officina Samba*, a left-wing paper, that they wanted "to run it as a service to working class women so that they would be liberated from housework."

At the same time in Porto in the north, women who were once maids to the rich occupied a house which they turned into a co-operative for housework, with a creche and canteen. They said: "We will no longer do useless work in the houses of the bourgeoisie. We want to be of service to other workers, not to parasites."

Early in 1975 the women from these two occupations started a union for all domestic workers, initially to demand a national minimum wage.

They had meetings in Porto and Lisbon and within six months there were 5,000 in the union — cleaners in houses and hospitals, workers in laundries, nurseries and canteens.

They started a labour exchange in opposition to exploitative employment agencies which openly encouraged prostitution.

In Lisbon they opened a home for domestic workers whose employers had fled the country. Its cheap canteen

is used not only for meals but for meetings and music, and it is in direct contact with agricultural co-operatives for supplies.

### False Ties

Under fascism there had been a Catholic Service for the Protection of Servants. Sophia Ganhao said: "The employers took advantage of the very nature of our work by creating false ties with bribes and paternalistic attitudes. Their sole aim — to keep us apart so they could use us as slaves. The Catholic organisation disguised the class conflict with moral and religious preaching. They attempted to justify the 'social usefulness' of the domestic servant, and legitimize our exploitation."

Still representing the interests of the church, the right-wing and the employers, but renamed the Free Union of Domestic Servants, it is now posing as an alternative to the Domestic Workers Union. The DWU is demanding recognition as the only union for domestic workers.

They are also presenting these demands to the Ministry of Labour:

- Guaranteed national minimum wage, the same as the building, steel and ship workers have won;
- Paid holidays and sick leave. They have already won the right to 90 days paid maternity leave.

Many unmarried mothers do domestic work as it's the only work they can get. They are not entitled to social security, state housing or any state health benefits.

The DWU is taking up the case of a woman who was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for killing her baby at birth. The leaflet shows how deeply they are challenging the whole state set-up by supporting her. □

Contact the Women and Portugal Solidarity Group, 12/13 Lt. Newport St, London WC2 for more information. They are planning to produce a pamphlet, organise an international women's evening, an exhibition and a delegation to Portugal.



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)



## "What we need is guts"

At a meeting of JAIL — Justice Against Identification Laws — on May 23, Rose Davis (second from left; see *Spare Rib* 42), described Peter Chappell, jailed for his part in digging up the Headingley cricket pitch during the campaign to free George Davis (right), as a martyr who must be released. "What we need in this country is guts," she said.

Lea Ward (third from right) and Barbara Whitby (left) founded JAIL to fight for the release of their husbands, both victims of mistaken identity.

Peter Hain (third from left) was partly responsible for George Davis' sudden release on May 12. Hain was acquitted of a charge of bank robbery because of weak identification

evidence — three young school-students' story was contradicted by a fourth's.

In the Davis case, only five (all policemen) out of 43 witnesses picked him out in 39 identification parades.

The Devlin Report, conclusions of a Home Office committee of inquiry, clinched it: "We are satisfied that in cases which depend wholly or mainly on eye-witness evidence of identification, there is a special risk of wrongful conviction."

The Queen waved her wand and Davis was free — though not declared innocent.

The papers were slobbering: "I stood by his side as dark-eyed Rosie ran screaming with happiness down the platform

to fling her arms around him.

"Her tears of joy splashed my lapels as she hugged and squeezed the man she had battled so hard to free . . . George said several times, 'This has got to be the greatest night of my life'."

Rose and George Davis don't yet know how involved they can continue to be in the campaigns to free Chappell and to change the identification laws (the Director of Public Prosecutions has already issued new guidelines for safeguards). George is being pestered for personal appearances. He even appeared at the Who concert in May — the Who's manager was once framed. □

Jill Nicholls

## DOMESTIC MURDER

Wreaths "in memory of all battered women murdered by our legal system" were laid on the steps of Birmingham law court on May 27. The National Women's Aid Federation made this gesture to protest the ruling that led to the death of Pauline Williams.

She woke up in the night on May 16 to find her husband standing over her with a pitchfork. They've been separated for 18 months, and she'd had an injunction against him since January.

On May 18 she went to court and pleaded with Judge Rose Heilbron to put her husband in prison.

The judge said it was one of the worst cases she could remember — but felt Mr Williams recognised the seriousness of the offence, and as it was a "domestic affair", let him go.

On May 20 at 3am, neighbours heard screams. Ms Williams was found stabbed to death. □

## REFUGE ON THE CHEAP

Battered women and their children who have sought shelter with Cardiff Women's Aid have had to suffer cramped conditions since the Refuge opened in August 1975.

A report produced recently by the Women's Aid group revealed that 30 women and 67

children were given refuge in the first six months of opening the tiny terraced house in Cardiff, and many more had had to be turned away.

The Refuge has saved the local Councils an estimated £4,000 in three months, in terms of the bed and breakfast fees they could have paid instead, and the high cost of keeping a child in care these days — £60 a week.

But still the County of South Glamorgan turned down an application for workers under the 1975 Urban Aid scheme. Eventually, after threats of closure, the Council agreed to put a greatly reduced application into the Welsh Office, and a grant to employ one worker came through in April. Women's Aid also applied for money for two workers from the Job Creation Project of

## NURSERIES: NATURAL WASTAGE?

30,000 workers in Tayside demonstrated against the cuts in public spending, on March 5. That afternoon Tayside Regional Council announced that three new nursery schools, in Whitfield, Ardler and Menzieshill, would not be opening and that 50 nursery nurses would lose their jobs.

In existing nurseries, the number of staff is to be reduced. Tayside Regional Council told representatives of the nursery nurses' union, NALGO, that this may be offset by "natural wastage". But the nurses and NALGO feel that a child/nurse ratio of 10 to 1 is not satisfactory.

The key issue is to get these nurseries opened. Thirty of the nurses are students. Two years ago, they were promised secure careers at the end of their training. Now they have no other hope of getting jobs.

Ian Linn of NALGO stressed that the public are being denied a service which has been paid for. The nurseries have been built and equipped at a cost of over £200,000. Hundreds of children are on waiting lists for places at nursery schools in Dundee.

A nursery nurse, Maureen Shields, said: "These nurseries are in housing schemes where there are a number of high-rise flats. Mothers and children will suffer as well as nurses if the schools do not open."

The Dundee Branch of NALGO has launched a public campaign to get the nurseries opened. Leaflets have been distributed in shopping centres, and attempts are being made to form action committees in local community centres.

The National Executive of NALGO has ruled out the possibility of strike action or an overtime ban until negotiations with the council are completed. But by then it may be too late. □

Ingrid Muir

Manpower Services Commission. That money has also come through.

Every town and valley of South Wales needs a refuge, and groups are forming to fight for them. Cardiff Women's Aid, part of the National Women's Aid Federation, hope to form a South Wales Region so groups can work together. □ Jane Hutt Contact them c/o 108 Salisbury Rd, Cathays, Cardiff.



## Husbands' Benefit

The Government have ditched the single tax-free child benefit of £2.50 payable to the mother, which was to be introduced by April 1977.

Instead of this election promise they have decided to retain the present complicated system of Child Tax Allowances, Family Allowances, Family Income Supplement, Child Interim Benefit (see SR 45) and pay £1 (30p after tax) for the first child.

What made them change their minds? They realised that the new system would lead to a drop in a married man's take-home pay (of £3.16 for a man with two children paying the standard rate of tax) just when they were trying to secure a pay deal with the TUC.

The point of the postponed Child Benefit scheme was to ensure that child allowances go to the person who actually supports the child. At the moment they go mainly to the father in the form of a tax allowance, regardless of how he spends the money.

The existing Family Allowance of £1.50 for each child and now this £1 for the first child, is often the only money a mother can be sure of. Also, those among the low paid not paying income tax, or on Family Income Supplement (who are now 20p worse off if they claim the taxable child benefit) would have received a higher child allowance without any increase in cost to the Government. □

Rose Ades



LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFL)

Pensioners and their supporters — mostly women from all over London — picketed the DHSS buildings at Elephant and Castle on May 25. They were protesting at the huge increase in the cost of electricity (over 50% in a year) and gas, compared with the totally inadequate £2 pension rise announced in the recent budget, not to be implemented until November.

The fight for warmth is crucial at the moment because, with the winter months over, pensioners will receive their bills, and for many this will mean their cut-offs as well. □

### PERSONAL

**GAY SWITCHBOARD** 01-837 7324 (women volunteers for switchboard needed)

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**WOMEN OFFSHORE** are not covered by discrimination legislation. Women who have worked or would like to work offshore (ships, oil rigs) share your experiences via Susan Kirkwood, Handellaan 51, Den Haag.

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Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies in Highgate area. Tel 01-348 5593 before 10am.

**GIRL NINETEEN** seeks reliable female friends. Ring 01-703 2235x at 5.00pm any day

Festival Club 2 Brydges Place, St. Martin's Lane, WC2 welcomes women. Membership £3.00. SAE for details

**EILEEN HAGGER** please contact Spare Rib. There is a letter from a reader for you.

*Terry  
McCarthy  
loves  
Spare Rib  
OK*

### COURSES

**GENTLE GHOST SHORT SUMMER COURSES** INCLUDE: alternative medicine; astrology; Buddhist meditation; exploring love/sex/relationships; Jung/dreams; law; massage; meditation; occult wisdom; new aspects of psychotherapy, etc. Brochure from: 33 Norland Rd, London W11 (SAE). 01-603 8739

### PUBLICATIONS

**FOR GAY WOMEN:** "THE GIRLS' GUIDE-1976" pocketsize international bar guide and complete directory. 40 countries/2000 listings. £2.00 at Sterling's Bookstore, 57 St Martin's Lane, WC2 and Symposium Bookshop, 12 Market St, Brighton

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Women's Liberation Workshop. Women Information Newsletter Service. 38 Earlham St., London WC2. 01-836 6081. Open 12 to 10pm Mon to Sat.

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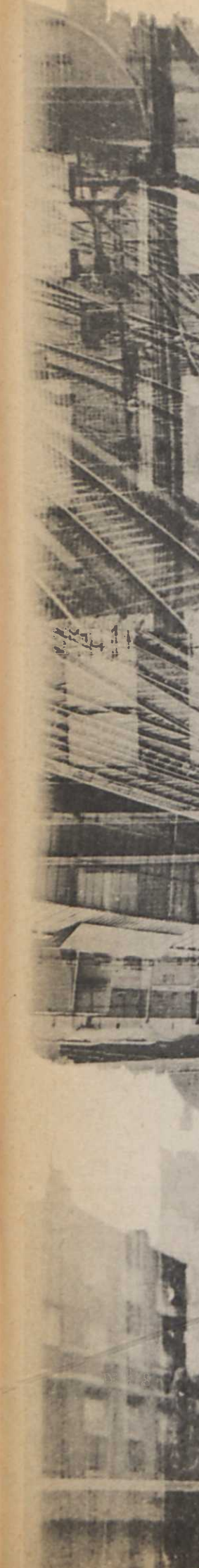
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**f**rom the kitchen window you can see the whole of King's Cross station spread out underneath you: the massive iron and stone curve of the station building itself, the tatty warehouses and sheds. And then the railway lines themselves, snaking out secretly and backwards and then suddenly fanning out into a thousand arteries of shining black steel leaping through London and beyond to the places you can only imagine, the lines pulsing her brain with the excitement of where they're going.

Maggie's relation to them in space doesn't change that much; you can see them from the kitchen; you can't from the bed sitting room. When you're five flights down on the ground again you're only really conscious of the high brick wall opposite, and the noise. The railway lines define the neighbourhood all right: Railway Hotel on the corner that the Council's started using for temporary accommodation for other single mothers not so lucky as she, as the social worker kept telling her; Railway Cafe opposite the launderette with coloured transfers on the window and a goldfish tank next to the curry puffs and ketchup bottles; Railway Tavern where Ted sometimes drops in to meet her on Friday nights. The trains time her life, crashing through fitful dreams at night, slackening off in the early hours, roaring her out of bed in the mornings faster than any alarm clock. If she's in a good mood she'll time Ted's egg by the 8.05 to Edinburgh; on the other hand, on a bad day she'll shout at Ted to make his own bloody breakfast and curse at Frieda for wasting good food on her plate.

Maggie awoken from the damp heavy warmth of Ted's body dead in sleep and the blankets piled on the single bed with a dip in the middle brushes her hair and clutches back at the ribbon of dreams from the night before. Maggie awoken from dreams of flying, from dreams of women with long hair building houses of hair, sits on the lavatory calculating whether she can afford a new pair of tights this week. A crash on the stairs and a thumping on the door opposite jerks her attention back to the lavatory door which badly needs repainting. You're never alone in this world, away from other people's demands, except in the lavatory. And this one doesn't really count, considering it's shared with four other tenants. That'll be Jo, with her kid Lucy. Never late Jo is, half past eight sharp like a bloody train steaming up and come on Maggie for Christ's sake they close the nursery doors at nine you should know that by now. OK, OK, I'm coming, put the milkbottles out, powder her nose, don't let the neighbours see you leave, Ted, can't trust them not to tell the welfare and get my money stopped, find Frieda's windcheater and out they go.

Out on the street the fog sears the back of your nostrils and the cold sticks a needle up every pore. You wouldn't know it was autumn except for the odd dry leaf blowing down the road from the cemetery. Kick in the gut from the air though, somehow. Twenty years ago she was Lucy and Frieda's age, putting on school uniform for the first day of the winter term, long serge skirt suddenly covering the scratched knees used to shorts, thick woolly stockings sliding strangely up the white smooth skin, nylon suspender belt holding in her stomach making her think of the opening under the dark bush below.

Wonder if things will change for these two, twenty years on, poor little buggers. No fathers, and the nursery staff working devotedly to wipe out the evil influence of their feckless mothers. What with the wind and the trains and the traffic and her woollen hat pressed tightly over her ears it's hard to hear what Jo's saying. She yells back.

"What?"

"I said, are you coming to the meeting tonight?"

"What meeting?"

"The women's meeting, you dummy, that lot from the Charter, the Working Women's Charter or whatever they call it —"

"Oh, them —"

They'd met them in the pub a couple of weeks back. Long skirts, talking about unions and equal pay. Jo and Maggie and some of the others from work had gone back last week and met them again. They wanted to get them into a union, lots of ideas about what they could do for you. She hadn't really forgotten, hadn't wanted to think about it really. Anger of a kind; what could those girls, students most likely, know about her life, bloody cheek to come wading in and try and organize your life like that. They'd listened to what Jo had said though. Jo always had had the gift of the gab, she could make a stone laugh doing her imitation of Mr Silver trying to get her up behind the cloakroom door.

Maggie had stayed quiet, gone home thinking if you think you're oppressed mate then listen to this. And then back home with Ted and Frieda both asleep and Jo gone, it had all burst up in tears Maggie had squashed down with cigarettes. What right did they have, that lot, getting you to think about how bloody life was, sitting in this poky flat with Ted always so tired he never played with Frieda or talked to herself and fell asleep straight after having it off. And now here's Jo dancing around saying come to another meeting.

"I don't know —" Maggie yells back as they cross the main road at a run, "Ted's got his union meeting tonight," she lies, "I'll have to be in with Frieda. And anyway, there's a programme I wanted to watch —"

They're at the nursery. Quick kiss on the cheek for Lucy and Frieda, watch their skinny legs scuttle across the yard and in through the corrugated iron hut's battered doors. Quarter to nine. Time for a cup of tea before they're due in down the road. Silvex Modes, do pop in ladies, convenient hours to suit you and the kiddies, and we'll lovingly screw you over for fifty pence an hour. At least there's no awkward questions asked, no needing to bother with insurance, does mean there's a bit to add to her measly SS giro every week.

Jo and Maggie, both early twenties but looking thirty, dressed by jumble sales as they can't afford Silvex Modes prices, gaze at each other over the plastic pots of mustard on the formica table top.

"What's this programme then, lovey?"

"The Amazons, it's called. This woman says there's still some of them around. You know, women with only one tit, they cut the other off so they could shoot better with a bow and arrow, they live together, all women and no men, this woman's written a play about them —"


Lovely face, Jo has, despite the lines and pale-

# *dreamlines*

## *a story by michele roberts*

*'Dreamlines' is the third in our series of fiction from the Women Writers Collective*





ness, dark hair and blue eyes, says she got them from her wild Irish grandmother. Not like her, Maggie, she has to put a lot of effort into looking nice. Ted laughs at her, putting on her warpaint he calls it, but he's pleased enough when all his mates ogle her down the pub.

"Sounds pretty daft to me. Tell us about it if it's so important."

Maggie sucks on a No.6

"I don't know, just caught my imagination somehow I suppose, thought it might be a bit of a laugh. Reminded me of us I suppose, girls without men. And of those girls in the pub, it was one of them told me about it —"

"So you have been thinking about them. Well, come on then, Maggie, let's go then, shall we. They might be OK after all, hell, it's an evening out at least —"

"I've told you, there's no-one to look after Frieda. All right for you with Mrs Ash next door, you don't have to worry. Down the pub as often as you want with all the fellers —"

"Bloody hell — I don't neglect that kid, I'm a good mother to her, I've a perfect right to go out of an evening. Stuck at work all day with no-one to come home to at night — all very well for you sitting holding hands with Ted with little Frieda watching, you don't know what it's like, being on your own, not really —"

Maggie's never told Jo how bad it's been recently with Ted. There are some things you just keep your mouth shut about and one of those is when sex isn't much good. Especially when you've always let on that it was great before.

"Don't I hell — oh, go to hell —"

Jo's voice follows her heels clicking fast over the cafe's tiled floor.

"Maggie, you fucking idiot, come back, I'm sorry —"

Go anywhere, out of this whole mess. Except that she's got to clock in in five minutes time. All right for some on their autumn inter-city breaks. Get away from it all, he coos over the radio every morning, you ladies are so wonderful, you deserve a little luxury —

Silvex Modes is on the top floor of a decaying terrace house opposite the cafe. The council has it marked down for demolition, part of their plan for new accommodation for existing council tenants on either side. There's no hurry for that now that the money's been cut back, Mr Silver can go on economizing on space and heat and lighting for his twelve women workers for a good few years yet, and in any case, no-one's been round to check up on him for a long time now.

Jo and Maggie are lucky, they've managed to swing it so that they work side by side. Hard to talk though; the machines are as noisy as the trains back at the flats and there's pop music screaming out all day long from the radio wedged on top of the mantelpiece. Dave Whatsit introducing all the records, voice like malted chocolate choking you with sweetness. You're so special ladies, just because you're you. As a mere male, what can I do but worship, you're all woman, every bit of you, the funny silly things you say and do.

Maggie's mum taught her how to sew, years ago, they had an old Singer from her aunt who died, and ran up the clothes for all the family. Maggie remembers one dress: it was plum velvet with lace all round the neck and cuffs, clutch bag to match.

It took her a week to make, that dress, she'd made it specially for the dance at the police cadets college, and then she'd been so shy she'd spent most of the evening in the Ladies. That was when she met Jo. Jo borrowed her lipstick and said she liked her dress, it had all started from there.

Their shift is from half-nine to half-two. Part-time work, so you can't expect the same rates as fulltimers would get. No point making a fuss; plenty more women with young kids anxious for work, as Mr Silver will explain to silence the muttering that occasionally drowns even the machines. Teabreak: Jo's fooling about as usual, pretending to be Princess Anne choosing a wedding dress from Silvex Modes. Queer how it gets us, all women and no men, the way we let off steam, like being back at school again, lifting up people's skirts in the cloakroom. Half-past two at last. Maggie's eyes and back are aching like hell. Good excuse to be grumpy and quiet while the others talk about the meeting and to avoid Jo's eyes, pretending not to hear her abrupt conversational openings. Maggie grabs her bag from the wire cage under her seat, throws on her coat and is down the stairs and out in the street before any of the others. First time in a year she hasn't waited for Jo so they can do their shopping together.

Maggie's gone the opposite way from Tesco's; her heels are sinking into grass. The park's empty at this time of day before the kids are let out of school. There's a big house at the end of an avenue of chestnuts. They store deckchairs in it now and in summer they have art exhibitions there. She hates parks; it takes half an hour to get there from the flats and then the kids are put inside one lot of railings like some kind of animals and you walk up and down inside another lot and watch them. The trees poise to eject leaves and hurl them at the wind, there is nobody in the big house to see the park's invasion by the people, the iron benches under the elms are empty, each foot curling into a clutch of leaves. Ladies you're so wonderful, so smiling and serene. Except when I bleeding am then no-one knows anything's up, not even Jo. All this mud's going to ruin my shoes. Funny that Jo wanted me to come with her so much. Always thought I was the shy one of us two. But then she always thinks that I manage. Wind's colder now, you've got to be a kid to enjoy it, go shooting down the hill flailing your arms pretending to be an aeroplane. Maggie's sitting hunched up on the bench, its iron legs striking chilly through her tights, conker cases under her feet, cigarette between her lips. Wonder where Jo is.

Christ — look at the time — I'll be late collecting Frieda.

High heels stumbling over gravel, coat flying open. Three men, unemployed they must be, on the bench near the gate, smoking pitifully thin rollies, brighten up as she rushes past.

"Hey, love, what's the hurry? Lost your boyfriend, have you? Slow down, girl, he's not worth it —"

The nursery's doors and windows are shut, a sweet paper lurching in the wind the only movement in the yard. Then as her stomach jumps in panic, Maggie sees them in the far corner, Lucy and Frieda, with Jo beside them. Squatting to hug the two kids, fussing with Frieda's collar, unable to stop holding her in relief. Jo's voice comes down to her, gentle.



"It's OK, Maggie, I got here a bit late as well, but they were waiting, you didn't run away did you, loves? I was going to take them both back with me if you didn't turn up, I was going to get us fish and chips as a treat —"

Jo's talking even faster than usual, shows she's still feeling a bit down.

"Thanks, Jo."

Maggie finishes tying Frieda's shoelace, stands up, meets Jo's eyes. They both know it'll be all right between them in a bit. Arm-in-arm back down the hill, kids hanging on one at each side. Funny that the kids are so quiet, usually after a day cooped up in there they're jumping around all over the place.

"Mum —"

It's Frieda, tugging at her hand.

"Yes, love?"

"Want some Smarties, like the man said —"

"What man, love?"

"The funny man, Uncle Funny —"

"What man? There aren't any men in the nursery — Frieda — what've you been doing? Who're you talking about?"

Maggie's shaking Frieda, who starts howling. Jo's clutching Maggie's arm.

"It's all right, Maggie, I was going to tell you when we got home, shut up will you, the kids are all right I tell you —"

Jo's organizing them all, down the hill at a brisk pace, impossible to talk while you time a dash across the road scooping the kids up with you as lorries thunder in both directions farting diesel fumes into your face. Out into the street again from the chippie, warm smelly parcel telling your hands and nose you're still alive, feet remembering as they do every day to avoid the broken-up pavement in front of the pub. Steam on the kitchen window cuts off the railway lines, making the tiny kitchen for once a friendly place. Jo and Maggie sitting cradling cups of tea, chip papers stuffed into the waste bucket, the kids eating theirs next door in the bedsit, watching television.

"They're OK, Maggie, honest. He can't have talked to them for long, as soon as he saw me coming he cleared off quick. Probably they didn't see a thing, and if they did, well, they've both seen blokes in the bath before now —"

"It was my fault, I should have been there. Leaving them alone like that. Suppose some of the other kids saw him, suppose the nursery finds out, they'll blame us I tell you —"

"Balls. They should bloody well have stuck around till we turned up. How were they to know we weren't kept late at work? They're the ones supposed to be looking after the kids in the daytime, they should bloody well make sure there aren't any funny characters hanging around outside —"

Jo sounds more aggressive than usual, which means she is worried. Maggie calms down straight away, pats her arm and pours her another cup of tea.

"Ok, you're right, they don't really care that much. Got to get home to their old man, I daresay. That means we'll have to bloody well do something ourselves —"

"What, stop perverts hanging around? How —"

"No, you silly bugger, it's not just that. Well, I mean, it's the whole bloody mess. I don't know, maybe we ought to give up work. Or what we could do, well, what I mean is, maybe wouldn't

do any harm going down to the pub tonight to see if the others are there, only a quick drink mind, we can't be sure what they're like yet —"

"But they want to talk about work, Maggie, get us into a union and all that. They haven't got kids, I don't think, they don't know what it's like —"

"Well, they bloody should then. What's the use of going on about unions and higher pay and all that — we're still stuck with the nursery closing at half-past three. You tell me where there's a union'll get me a job that pays me any more to go off at half-past three —"

"I don't know, do I, course there bleeding isn't. And anyway, even if we ask them, I mean, even if they think we can do something about it, though Christ knows what, I don't want a lot of knowalls who haven't got any kids and don't know the first thing about them telling us what to do with ours —"

"Well, we won't let them, that's all," Maggie says lamely. "Anyway, no harm just going, you were going to go, you said so, it was you wanted a night out. Let's go and just have a drink, Ted'll look after the kids, your Lucy can sleep in Frieda's bed, be a bit of company for her."

Jo and Maggie arm-in-arm down the street to the Railway Tavern, high heels clicking on the paving behind the packing sheds. The sun like a peach at seven, furring the railway lines with light. Shivering pleasantly in her new blouse trimmed with lace nicked from Silvex Modes the week before, two quid borrowed from Ted means they can afford a few halves, jumping over the gutter full of leaves.

Jo's feeling OK now, going out with Maggie, she's back to teasing.

"What about your programme, then, those Amazons?"

"Piss off, Ted'll watch it for me. Oh, no he won't, there's football on, the other side. Well, I don't know, probably wouldn't have been much good anyway —"

"What's made you change your mind?"

Jo isn't really interested, she's busy lighting her cigarette. Standing in the pub doorway out of the wind striking her third match, the goddess of beer depicted in glowing-coloured tiles on either side of her, massive arms holding up sheaves of grain. Pushing open the door of the pub. Gust of warmth, beer and music rushing out to meet them and suck them in towards the bar. On your own, darling? Come and join us then, patting her thigh. Fuck off, Steve, will you, I'm with my friend tonight. Two halves of bitter please, thanks love. Sitting at a table in the corner so that they can see the door, catch the others' eyes when they come in. Maggie drawing pictures with her fingertips in the spilt beer on the marble tabletop.

"Those Amazons? Bit of a fairy tale really, isn't it, so what if there's still some around. See me with one of my tits cut off, can't you, just the excuse for Ted to be off after Betty Ash again —"

While they're still laughing the others arrive all at once. Shifting round the table, squashing up against Jo to make room for them all. The two women from the Charter are in jeans this time, a bit scruffy. None of us exactly Dave Whatsit's ideal woman, you could say. Maggie takes a sip of beer to remind the others that that's all she's there for, and looks defiantly around. No flies on us, we'll soon see what you're like. □



*Margaret Charman* is a second year electrical fitter at the government training centre for the Portsmouth Naval Base Dockyard. "Electrical fitting" covers many trades from installing telephones to wiring ships and weapons. Like other areas of electrical engineering, it is a growing field of employment for women. Yet there are battles to be fought . .

*Angela Phillips* talks to Margaret about how she came into the job, and her experience with the work, the boy apprentices and management.

## **" I'm gonna be an electrical engineer "**

(with apologies to Peggy Seeger, see page 41)



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

Margaret (right) at the workbench with fellow apprentices Peter Black and Russell Brown

"Two years ago I had one 'O' level, in cookery. I hated school and just wanted to get out, but I didn't know what to do. It was my father who suggested this apprenticeship. He and my brothers work in the Dockyard, and they saw it advertised. The careers officer at school wasn't very helpful. She suggested a shop job or a job in a bank. When I told her about this apprenticeship she hadn't even heard that girls could apply."

The course lasts four years, after which apprentices are employed in the Dockyard or are free to leave and get a job outside if they wish. Margaret feels that should she want to have a family first and then return to work (she doesn't want to stay at home), there would be more security in a Dockyard job at the Naval Base because the Ministry of Defence, in line with all other government departments, give relatively generous maternity leave and guarantee the job back.

There are a few women working in the Dockyard now, as up until two years ago one or two applied and were accepted each year. Five girls started in Margaret's year, and six last

year. But this year, since the Sex Discrimination Act came into force, the number has leapt up to 81 applicants, of whom about 20 will probably get through. The overall figure for boys and girls applying this year was double the previous year, 1050 applying for the 200 apprenticeship places, 900 actually taking the exam. A spokesman at the Dockyard job training centre attributed this increase to the dramatic growth of unemployment amongst school-leavers and the relative security of the job. The ratio of girls applying has risen startlingly — last year one out of 60 applicants were girls, whereas this year the figure is one in 11.

"My friend applied at the same time as me, and the school tried to talk her into staying on to do more 'O' levels instead. I think boys get given more details about apprenticeships. If I could re-do my time at school I'd learn something. I'd like to do physics; you couldn't do that until the last year and then only if you were in the 'A' stream. We didn't do enough basic arithmetic, like fractions and decimals, we learnt new maths. When I came here I'd forgotten basic arithmetic, and I didn't even know how to wire a plug. I couldn't touch things like that at home because my brother always did them."



However, the two boys I spoke to had both learnt basics like changing plugs at home. And they had also learnt basic physics at school, learning how to wire up an electrical circuit and so on.

"When we started the boys were always waiting for us to make mistakes. They thought we should be at home helping mum. The majority have changed now. As long as we do our fair share it's OK. One problem was the way the instructors treated us. They couldn't do enough to help. They helped us more than they helped the boys, pointing out our mistakes more clearly. We don't really need the extra help. They even tried to make the boys be polite to us, stop swearing and things. It made them resent us. Really, it hasn't helped us get on good terms with the boys. There are always some boys who are quick to find out our bad points. They think their male ego is suffering because a girl is doing the same job as them.

"I came second in the Apprentice of the Year Awards (in the Portsmouth Dockyard) last year. Some boys thought it was favouritism. I got pretty upset when they said 'One of you girls had to get it.' I wouldn't like to think that I'm only getting anywhere because I am a girl.

"At first it was easier making friends with the boys than with the girls. I suppose we were competing for the boys' attention. They are fun to work with but you can't have a serious conversation with them. At dinner time the girls get together and talk. I'd like to see more girls here."

What about the work itself?

"In the first year we had a three month probationary period learning to use hand tools, mostly filing metals. Then we had a six week basic fitting course, learning to construct and read diagrams from a small bell circuit, and a light circuit in series. In the last part of the year we learned to draw,

centre explained that after the off-the-job basic training, described as "non-productive", two incentive bonuses could be added to the basic wage. One is payment by results, which depends on each particular job — similar to payment for piecework. The other is a productivity bonus of £4, which depends on the productivity of the whole Dockyard reaching a certain level.

So what do the boys think of girl apprentices? Peter Black, one of Margaret's group, is still very dubious about having girls around, and considers that they shouldn't really be doing this kind of work. "They can't lift the heavy motors". Since there are mechanical lifting devices this shouldn't prove much of a problem, but he also thought that they wouldn't like getting their hands rough and dirty . . . The girls clearly have to put up with quite a lot of chauvinism, and they know their behaviour is watched and commented on.

The few women already working in the Dockyard are all in the electrical section, which means doing the work related to telephone engineering, armature winding and electronics. Up until now this is the only area girl apprentices have been brought into. They don't have facilities for teaching boiler-making, sailmaking and painting to girls. One girl has applied for a shipwrights' apprenticeship but Margaret doesn't know if she has been accepted.

Last year a big row blew up because girls weren't allowed to work on the ships. At the time both shop stewards in the union — the EEPU — were boys.

"We tried for weeks and weeks to get something done. We got all the girls from the yard together but nothing came of it, so we decided one of us had to be shop steward."

Margaret was elected. Now the Sex Discrimination Act has been passed, in theory women can't be prevented from working on the ships, but so far, none are, because there are no

**"I've got better opportunity, more freedom.  
If I wasn't here I'd be behind a counter in a shop or in a factory."**

strip down and build up starters, motors and armatures (the mechanism that drives motors).

"In the second year we have been divided into groups of 25 and spend two months in five different shops. There is the machine shop, where you practise simple cutting jobs with different metals. Then shore insulation; bending and handling the conduits, the casing for electrical cables. Then electronics, where you make a radio and a speaker. Then car electronics, where you strip the electrical system of a car and rewire it. Lastly, 'pre-float' where you work on a model of a ship needing to be fitted, and do all the jobs which go into that. I'm working on car electronics at the moment. After this year I will be a mate to an electrical fitter in the Dockyard."

Male and female apprentices have equal pay, and are paid a percentage of the qualified rate according to their age. At 18, Margaret gets 70% of the national basic wage of £43.00, which works out at £30.10p. A supervisor at the job training

changing facilities yet. However some of the girl apprentices mean to try.

I asked Margaret if she had been intimidated by the work at any stage. She said there had been no problems at all during the training period, but she definitely felt a bit apprehensive about the next stage — going out on the job.

Overall Margaret felt that though the job, like many jobs, may not always be interesting, she had made a good choice:

"I've got better opportunity, more freedom. If I wasn't here I'd be behind a counter in a shop or in a factory."□

*For details of apprenticeships in electrical or other fields of engineering, contact: Engineering Careers Information Service, Engineering Industry Training Board, 54 Clarendon Road, Watford, Herts.*

*The EEPU — Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union — have recently produced an issue of their journal Contact aimed specifically at apprentices. EEPU, Hayes Court, West Common Road, Bromley BR2 7AU.*

## First win for Equality

Mrs. Valerie Perry, a GMWU member from Tamworth, became the first woman in Britain to win an equal pay ruling when an industrial tribunal in Birmingham ruled in her favour. Valerie, a glazer with Doulton Insulators, complained that a two-tier piecework system introduced by her employers at the beginning of the year was circumventing the application of equal pay and opportunity as no women workers were given access to jobs rated in the higher grade.

Although a number of women will benefit from the tribunal's ruling, Mrs. Perry will not earn anything extra. With the aid of the GMW she fought for the principle involved. The GMWU stands by its principles and by its members.



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# Making Changes

## Making Love

**S**ince writing about the work of sexual self-help groups (*Spare Rib* 42 and 44) we have been asked to consider the difficulties involved in expressing what we have discovered about our sexuality in a sexual relationship. Learning to feel good about ourselves sexually can be the first step towards having the confidence to share sexual pleasure with a partner. But the transition can be very hard to make.

Eleanor Stephens discusses some of the problems involved, especially the fact that blueprints for how we should be and what we should do sexually have been defined by men for men. She emphasises that the struggle to change this intimate part of our lives is linked to a wider campaign to fight sexism in the society at large.

**S**ex is only one aspect of a relationship, but it is an important one. Being able to share sexual pleasure with another person and to express ourselves sexually in an honest and open way can lead to better communication in other areas of the relationship; and as individuals it can give us greater self knowledge and confidence to take responsibility in other aspects of our lives. If sexual communication is reciprocal and mutually satisfying, we can grow close to another person and share our feelings without losing our identity, independence or self respect. But if this sexual relationship centres on the needs and desires of one partner at the expense of the other, then the unequal power relationship that develops will reflect and be reflected in lots of other interactions. The frustration, bitterness and self-hatred arising from this may sour every part of our lives.

Just as women have been denied full and equal participation in so many of our institutions and social relations, so we have missed out on sexual fulfillment and pleasure too. Ours has been the passive role with our pleasure defined in terms of pleasing men. Traditionally women's sexuality has been

interpreted in terms of our ability to conceive and give birth, and heterosexual sexual relations have centred on this model of sexual intercourse, namely penetration of the vagina by the penis followed by ejaculation. (Had female orgasm been crucial to reproduction as male orgasm is, this scenario would have been very different!)

Most people now accept that not all sexual activity is aimed at reproduction, and that women have sexual desires and responses which are independent of our ability to have babies. Yet we are very slow to challenge this traditional model of heterosexual intercourse. Even if we know from what we have learned about ourselves through masturbation that this style of sex leaves us out in the cold, we are very hesitant to make changes. Part of what holds us back is the very real difficulty in discussing sex and our own sexual feelings with another person, particularly the person we are sleeping with; partly we are not aware of other ways of lovemaking which take women's sexual responses into account and allow women full participation. Before we consider some of the communication difficulties, let's look more closely at what's wrong with traditional intercourse and how we can improve on it.

I realise writing this how rarely I use the term 'intercourse'. This isn't just because it sounds stuffy ('fucking' or

worse 'screwing' have the same objectionable connotations) but because it is a form of sexual activity defined by men for male orgasm and female reproduction. While orgasm is not the only pleasurable aspect of making love, it is a significant life-affirming experience which women have traditionally missed out on. To say that women do not need to have orgasms is just a rationalisation for an unsatisfactory, unfair situation. (How many men make love consistently without ever, or very rarely having orgasms?)

The idea of intercourse implies a social and sexual communication between individuals and there is no reason why it should continue to be colonised by men. As feminists, we have to reclaim and reinterpret it as a reciprocal interaction between equals. To do this we need to establish different ways of relating sexually with men, but at the same time we must take care not simply to replace one set of rules with another; this will only serve to oppress and limit our sexuality, just as the old dogma has done. Instead we need to find out for ourselves what we are like as sexual people, and challenge the myths and models which have dictated how we *should* be.

We have known for many years now (some women must have always known from practical experience) that the clitoris plays a crucial role in female sexuality and that women need clitoral stimulation to reach orgasm. In this respect the clitoris, not the vagina, is the female equivalent of the penis. Yet even 'progressives' like Masters and Johnson, whose research showed this conclusively, still honour the penetration model, helping couples to improve upon the indirect sensations the woman feels during vaginal intercourse. Since no one asks why penetration should be the only aspect of making love that really counts, direct clitoral stimulation is relegated to 'foreplay' — a begrudging term at best, or to 'additional stimulation' as a side-





line to the main action.

Betty Dodson, a feminist artist who leads 'bodysex' workshops for women in New York City, sees this neglect of the clitoris as part of a sinister, anti-woman strategy: "Denial of the woman's phallus (clitoris) has for centuries been the essence of male domination and female asexuality and subjugation." But for individual men and women this can result from plain ignorance and is the fault of miseducation and sexual inhibition. We can begin to change this with honest, unbiased sex-education for children which, right from the start, gives women their due. (See box insert.)

Both the penis and the clitoris can be stimulated by hand or by mouth (so called 'oral sex') but women have another way of stimulating the penis, with the vagina, and this has become the traditional way of making love. For most couples it is the sum total of what they do together sexually. (I would say that out of all couples who had intercourse last night, 90% used this method for a period not exceeding five minutes including foreplay. 95% of the men would experience orgasm and a maximum of 15% of women, although a much higher number would fake orgasm or be unaware that they are not experiencing it.)

When we make love in the traditional missionary position (the 'woman on top' position is better since the woman has more control and can rub her clitoris against his pelvic bone) the clitoris is not touched directly at all. As the penis moves in and out of the vagina, the outside lips of the vagina also move and this puts some pressure on the clitoris which is situated just below where the labia meet. This traction provides some indirect clitoral stimulation and although the sensations in the vagina and surrounding area may feel very pleasant, and we may enjoy the pleasure and excitement this gives our lover, for most women it is not sufficiently strong to lead to a climax. In a recent meeting of 40 women in the women's movement where we were discussing this subject, only two women could have orgasms through penetration alone. Yet most of the other 38 felt inadequate and guilty that they could not since like all of us, they had grown up to accept this as the only normal way of making love.

If vaginal penetration does not work too well for women, what does? When we can free ourselves from all the prejudices against it (like the myth that our genitals are 'bad' and 'dirty' parts of our bodies) oral sex for women and men becomes a real alternative. For women this includes caressing and massaging the clitoris and surrounding area with the partner's tongue and lips, using licking, kissing and rubbing movements. It is important that rhythmic sensations are built up so her lover has to be sensitive to the woman's breathing, sounds and verbal suggestions to know when to continue with one kind of movement and when to change to a different spot or

*" 'Frigid' is a man's word for a woman who cannot have an orgasm in the missionary position in five minutes with only the kind of stimulation that is good for him."*

Betty Dodson

different pressure. (The importance of communication is paramount: for example, some women hold their breath when they become very aroused and close to orgasm. This is sometimes interpreted by their lover as lack of interest so instead of maintaining and heightening the rhythm, he or she may change to something quite different, much to everyone's frustration.) The saliva from the mouth provides constant lubrication to prevent irritation, which can be a problem with manual stimulation. Both people's hands are free to caress and stroke other areas such as thighs, breasts and vaginas, which can also be touched with the tongue, and the woman can move freely and build up muscle tension in her legs and pelvis which adds to the intensity of the climax and subsequent release.

There are tremendous practical advantages for men if they too can overcome their fears of this 'dark' region (both sexes share all the hang-ups of a sexually repressive society) apart from the emotional satisfaction and erotic pleasure of sharing another's sexual happiness. The man no longer has to feel pressure to maintain an erection and prolong penetration in the usually futile hope that if only he can continue long enough, the woman will have an orgasm too.

Some couples do use oral sex as foreplay, but because it's accepted that penetration is where it's really at, the man stops direct clitoral stimulation just

### How about trying it this way?

Most sex-education materials avoid all mention of the clitoris: the vagina is taken to be the equivalent of the penis. Intercourse is described in terms of the penis in the vagina, so it's not surprising both sexes grow up ignorant and confused about this. Perhaps this approach would be better:

Child: What's the difference between girls' and boys' bodies?

Adult: Mostly their genitals. Boys have a penis which they use for three different things. Girls have three separate places for each. For making love, girls have a clitoris which is small and in roughly the same place as the penis. Like the penis it feels good when it is touched. For peeing, girls have an opening just below their clitoris. For the first step in making babies, they have another opening into the vagina. etc. etc. . . .

as the woman begins to get excited, and penetrates instead. While some women can continue to build on these sensations, very many never get any further. Yet they do not feel they have the right to ask for a change of method in case their lover feels his penis is being rejected. It's time to start worrying about the woman's rejected clitoris!

It wasn't until I read Kate Millet's accounts of oral sex in *Flying* that I realised how rarely this is described and how far back in the closet it is kept (yet it's been seven years since Ann Koedt wrote *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm*). I'm sure many people reading this (women and men) find it as intimidating to read as I find it to write about. The fear and self disgust that we all have, women and men, about our bodies and our sexuality, and the irrational difficulty in communicating our feelings even to those we are most intimate with, make it terrifying even to discuss the possibility of changing our habitual sexual patterns in ways that would make our relationships more honest and equally satisfying.

People who would be willing to try this may be unfamiliar with how to set about it for while thousands of pages are devoted to penetration intercourse in sex manuals, oral sex is glossed over or condemned as a perversion. ('Hip' sex books contain detailed accounts of how women can learn to stimulate men orally ['fellatio'], but typically don't think such education is necessary for men.) One sensitive and explicit account I do have is in an unpublished paper by Kathie Kelly, 'A Radical Sex Manual for Women'. She suggests that the procedure which many couples find most satisfactory is for the woman to have her orgasm by oral stimulation and then while the vagina is lubricated and expanded (thus avoiding common problems of painful penetration) for the man to have his orgasm in the usual way.

She in fact recommends oral stimulation for the man's orgasm too, since in this way both people take turns in the 'active' role and no birth control is needed since sperms do not go into the vagina. However, many women do find that the vagina is an erogenous area and that penetration feels good, and there is no reason why this should not continue to be a pleasurable part of intercourse.

Once we are free from the pressure of having to have orgasms this way, penetration becomes much more enjoyable. Basically, both people must work out for themselves what suits them best by discussing what they both feel happy doing together. We must honestly express our preferences. It is not enough to say "Everything you do feels lovely", or to assume that because both people care for each other and are turned on, they must know instinctively what kind of lovemaking will give mutual pleasure.

Perhaps this is most difficult of all to accept: that in order to communicate sexually with another person we have at some time (not all the time) to discuss it. *Telepathy just does not work.* It is



# Making Changes Making Love

*"Telepathy just does not work. It is another myth of romantic ideology that we have to overcome."*

another myth of romantic ideology that we have to overcome. Women find it particularly difficult to take the initiative here since we have been brought up to play a passive role and, like Sleeping Beauty wait patiently for Mr Right to turn the key to our hearts and sexuality. While keeping women submissive, this also places a huge burden on men, many of whom are as confused and insecure about their sexuality as we are. Most men are only too relieved when the woman plucks up courage to share what she knows about her sexuality, and this can be a starting point for the relationship becoming more equal and open in other ways.

If this is so, why is it so hard to do? Why do people who feel quite comfortable expressing themselves on every other subject feel that they should keep quiet about this one, even when the misery involved may undermine both people's sense of themselves and finally destroy their relationship. A woman I know described her predicament this way: "I was so terrified of telling my lover what I enjoyed and responded to sexually that I finally froze up whenever he approached me. I forced myself to become asexual even though I knew from masturbating that I was not at all frigid. I felt so powerless that sex became something that I observed as a spectator, something that was *done to me*. At first I tried to fake enjoyment, but in the end I preferred to deny my sexuality entirely." (This woman joined a women's sexuality group and took home the materials they gave her to discuss with her boyfriend. Gradually, she learned to take more responsibility for her own pleasure and to share it with him, and so managed to escape from the bind she was in.)

Many of us have a shyness that makes it hard to talk about sex, and this is reinforced by society making it a taboo area that 'nice' people don't mention. But in many cases this reluctance goes deeper than modesty. Some of us use sex as a battleground for fighting other issues: the classic example is the wife who is powerless in the rest of her life and so her only weapon is to withhold sex from her husband. Obviously what we feel about the other person, whether or not we feel respected and taken seriously, or objectified and manipulated, will affect our sexual responsiveness, and our ability to be honest about sex. We may feel vulnerable, but if we truly

do not trust the other not to exploit or hurt us, then it is better not to have a sexual relationship at all rather than to go into it knowing that we must keep our real selves outside.

Since it is not accepted that people need to discuss what pleases them sexually, this issue may only come up in a crisis situation. By this time, we may be so desperately in need that we dare not say what we want in case it is refused. With the stakes so high, we know we can't deal with rejection so we may abandon the relationship rather than take the risk. Alternatively, we may raise the subject in an accusatory way ("And what's more, I've never got anything out of making love with you . . .") so of course our lover responds negatively. And one negative experience may put us off doing anything about this in the future. All this could be avoided if we accept that finding out about each other's sexuality is a normal part of the process of getting to know another person, just as we share with each other our preferences and feelings about food, films, opinions, whatever.

Another block which may prevent us participating fully in sexual pleasure is our ambivalence about the whole notion of pleasure. This is shared by men, since we have all been socialised into a society where the puritan ethic has associated pleasure with guilt, and where sexuality is particularly repressed. But sexism has played its part by convincing us that our primary role as women is as a giver rather than a recipient of pleasure: we are the nurturers and cherishers in the service of men, whether as mothers or prostitutes. Women often join the pre-orgasmic groups not for themselves but for their lovers and they may find that their only block to orgasm is their refusal to allow themselves to take rather than give pleasure. The distinction is anyway a false one — the knowledge that a person is being aroused and enjoying their sexuality is itself erotic; by one person holding back, the pleasure is diminished for both. Having an orgasm in particular demands some concentration and focus on sexual sensations and women often feel this is selfish and they don't deserve the attention. This ambivalence towards pleasure permeates many aspects of our lives. Eating is another form of self-gratification and I know of almost no women who do not have problems with this, and suffer huge feelings of guilt whether they eat obsessively or starve themselves.

Finally, there are important material reasons why women are reluctant to risk changing the status quo and why we help maintain unequal relationships with men, reinforced by the family. We are afraid of rocking the boat and losing what little we have. Carmen Kerr, a feminist therapist, says that not only do women think they will "die of embarrassment" if they suggest changes, but "They worry that their assertiveness will destroy the relationship and with it will go the love, security, economic and social privileges that couplehood guaran-

tees." In a society which still offers little in the way of alternatives, but much in the way of loneliness, these are not privileges but necessary means of survival.

At the recent women's liberation conference in Newcastle several workshop discussions focussed on the last part of the movement's sixth demand: the right of every woman to define her own sexuality. We discussed how we would campaign publicly around this demand in order to combat the sexist stereotypes of women's sexuality that we see all around us. These degrading images and attitudes contradict whatever new self-definitions we are working towards and keep us as objects in male consumer fantasies. (Working in Soho, I see it all around me!) What we do in bed with another person may seem far removed from any public campaign, but I believe the two are closely connected; by privatising sexuality we have cut it off from scrutiny and change. It has remained a personal arena of individual problem solving. Yet many of these problems stem directly from male defined cultural models. Our struggle to destroy these is as much a political as a personal fight.

By integrating our sexual politics and what we are learning about our own sexuality into the ways in which we relate to people sexually, we are contributing to new definitions of what it means to be a sexual person. The confidence that comes from this gives us greater power in changing other areas of our lives where women also have inferior status and play a passive role. One American woman summed it up like this: "After asking my lover to do oral sex just the way I like it, it was as easy as pie to ask for a raise at work." □

*There will be a planning meeting to discuss ways of campaigning around the second half of the Sixth Demand, on Friday 25 June at 7pm in the Spare Rib office, 9 Newburgh St, London W1.*

*"And it would indeed seem, that, on the path toward the higher development of sexual life on earth, as man has so often had to lead in other paths, that here it is perhaps woman, by very reason of sexual conditions which in the past have crushed and trammelled her, who is bound to lead the way and man to follow."*

Olive Schreiner  
'Woman and Labour'



# THEATRE

## MONSTROUS REGIMENT

A new theatre group with a militant name will begin touring this summer with their first play, *Scum: death, destruction and dirty washing*, by C.G. Bond and Claire Luckham. The group formed late last summer, spurred on by a member's dissatisfaction with the limited opportunities offered to women in most plays — as true still of fringe/political theatre groups as of the commercial theatre and television. Theatre groups contain more men than women because of the way in which both historical and contemporary subject matter for plays are seen — with men in the forefront of the action, and women as secondary characters. Monstrous Regiment have as a basic principle a determination that the company will at no time have more men than women in it — indeed their first production has five women and two men, a salutary experience for the latter minority who have had quite a bit of flak from some of their friends for being in a female-dominated group.

The play itself spans six months in 1870–71, covering the period before and during the Paris Commune when the people of Paris declared self government but were finally defeated by the National Government of Versailles. It is set on women's territory — a laundry — and follows the women as they take part in the Commune, take over the laundry and run it cooperatively, making it also into a meeting place for the area. It is a demonstration not only of the very important role women played in the Paris Commune, but also shows what happens to individual women when political events make it possible for them to seize control of their own lives and relationships. The play has original music, is directed by Sue Todd, and from a brief

rehearsal preview looks to be vigorous, funny and hard-hitting. The small section I saw from the second Act corrects some of the prevailing myths about the political backwardness of women in history; under the Commune many of the demands women were making for themselves were as progressive as some of the demands the present feminist movement makes.

The play will be touring around the country, to Cardiff, Crewe, Cambridge, Newcastle, Liverpool, Sheffield, Exeter, Bath, Portsmouth, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Look out for the group, even if your town isn't listed here. If you would like to find out about booking the play, please get in touch with Monstrous Regiment, 59 Camden Square, London NW1 (01-485 3860), who will negotiate fees with people and also give help and advice on how to deal with the administrative and organisational aspects of booking a theatre group.

Micheline Wandor

## BOOKS

### CAPITALISM, THE FAMILY, AND PERSONAL LIFE

by Eli Zaretsky  
(Pluto, £1.00)

A history of the family which tries to integrate a Marxist theory of history and economics with a feminist critique of sexism and women's oppression is really welcome both for feminists and socialists.

Thus, despite a jarring note in the preface (where the male writer pays the usual tribute to the support of his wife and daughter), I read this short book (150 pages) with great eagerness and interest. In it, Zaretsky examines the separa-

tion of the family from the economy, of work from personal relationships which has taken place under capitalism and argues for the re-integration, theoretically and politically, of these split halves of social existence.

His thesis, crudely summarised, is as follows: the feudal and early bourgeois forms of the family were productive units in the double sense of producing necessary goods (food, clothing etc.) and reproducing the labour force on which the family's — and society's — survival depended. The development of industrial capitalism took the production of necessary goods out of the family into factories and workshops, leaving the family as the place where sexuality, reproduction and childcare were carried on. Under modern capitalism, some of these functions have been — partially — socialised and birth-control has lightened the burden of continual childbirth, but...

*while the rise of industry largely freed women from traditional and patriarchal constraints, the expansion of personal life created a new basis for their oppression — the responsibility for maintaining a private refuge from impersonal society.*

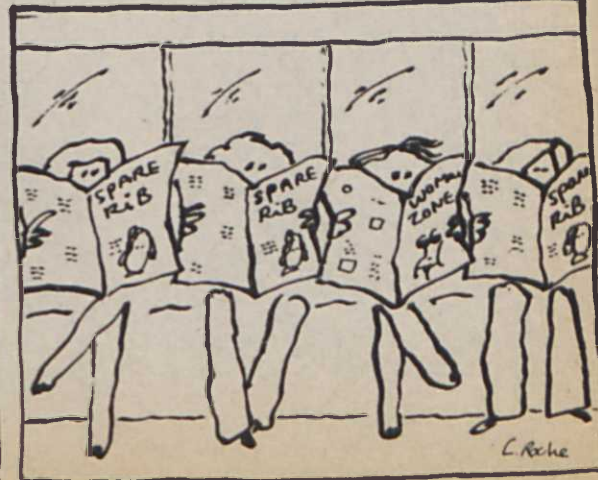
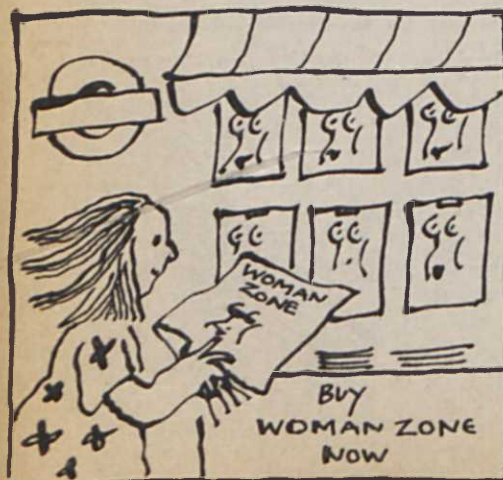
This argument is very useful; it poses some vital questions for women trying to understand the family, and sketches a rough map which we so badly need to situate the specialised studies — historical, economic and cultural — which have emerged from the women's movement. It also offers critical, informative accounts of Fourier and Engels, and of contemporary feminists like Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone and Juliet Mitchell. There's also a fairly objective criticism of the family in post-revolutionary China and the Soviet Union.

The historical chapters present a mixture of economic and ideological material, and the failure to distinguish between the different levels left me with a rather garbled, impressionistic grasp of the social forces at work. With the Victorian period, for example, the book gives a condensed cultural account of the idealisation of women and the family, but there is no clear historical analysis of what was really happening in either the bourgeois or working-class family during the 19th century.

Furthermore in emphasising the rise of 'subjectivity' within the family and contrasting that with the social nature of capitalist production, Zaretsky seems to confirm the very dichotomy he set out to challenge. It may well be true that modern family life (as opposed to the community or village) has to satisfy new and complicated emotional needs, but this certainly is not all that happens in the family. For, as recent feminist research on domestic labour suggests, in reproducing, socialising and servicing the labour force (children, men and women workers) the family plays a key economic role in an economy where labour power is the basic economy. So Zaretsky falls into the traditional socialist trap of defining 'productive function' far too narrowly.

Apart from the weaknesses in his treatment of capitalism and the family, the third term in his argument, that 'personal life' is the unique product of capitalism, I find difficult to accept. Granted the present form of personal experience, with its individualistic emphasis on emotional and sexual satisfaction within the nuclear family is peculiar to western industrial societies, but surely some form of personal life existed in the feudal village. It can't all have been happening at the economic level. Yet Zaretsky seriously advances this view:

*In previous centuries only a handful of individuals were prized for their special*





qualities of mind and character; the mass of men and women were ground down to an approximate sameness in the general struggle for existence.

This statement seems to me as true (and untrue) of factory workers in Bolton now, as of serfs in a 14th century English village.

His concept of 'personal life' is not satisfactorily defined; sometimes it refers to all activity which isn't 'production', at other times it refers rather more to the particular meaning and value people give to that activity. The first is a constant feature of all human societies, the second depends on the dominant ideology of the time. Personal life is *not* identical with ideas about personal life — as women trying to change their lives realise full well.

Some of these problems relate to Zaretsky's own political situation — as an American closely associated with the Californian magazine *Socialist Revolution* during the late 60s and early 70s. Much of his argument is directed at that privileged minority of students and middle-class young Americans who in an economic boom were temporarily able to see personal freedom totally divorced from political and economic realities. Yet, as Zaretsky concedes, most Americans, and certainly most Europeans *do* understand that their personal fates are inextricably tied up with their material circumstances. Struggles for better housing, health, education and a shorter working-day are the material basis for an improved personal life. The women's liberation movement and its six demands reflects this understanding very clearly. We may not understand precisely enough *how* our personal oppression relates to the social structures we live in, but I don't think most women would deny the connections!

So what we need is a book (or several) which explores the connections between the

family and the economy in a detailed, historically concrete way. *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life* isn't it, but it's a thought-provoking beginning. Read it, if only for the imaginative leap in the last few pages, where Zaretsky projects a future society with a surplus of necessary goods, socially owned, and where the purposes and character of work can be determined by individual needs. Liberation indeed!

Jean Radford

## A FORTUNATE CATASTROPHE; SUGAR-PINK ROSE; ARTHUR AND CLEMENTINE; THE REAL STORY OF THE BONOBOs WHO WORE SPECTACLES

by Adela Turin and Nella Bosnia

(Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative, £2.50 each)

In North America, feminist presses — Lollipop Power, The Feminist Press, The Canadian Women's Press, etc. — have been producing an impressive array of children's books that combat sex-stereotyping. Despite occasional amateurishness and a cheap (often stapled) presentation, these books have had an enormous impact on 'straight' publishers as well as meeting the growing US and Canadian public demand for a non-sexist literature for children.

But alternative publishing and distribution in Britain has never been sufficiently strong to produce non-sexist children's books (with the honourable exception of Partisan Books' duplicated stories). Despite growing public awareness, the critical debate on children's books in this country has been dogged both by entrenched respect for 'literary merit' and by most children's librarians' and teachers' lack of involvement in the sexism issue.

## WRITERS & READERS PUBLISHING COOPERATIVE

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Make cheques/POs payable to: Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative, and send with this form to: Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative, 14 Talacre Road, London NW4 3PE.

Against this uninspiring background the Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative have translated and published here four Italian non-sexist children's picture books which are already well-known and popular in Italy and France. Unlike the North American books they are glossy full-colour hardbacks, professionally illustrated and laid out. And so they will definitely be noticed and taken seriously by librarians, teachers and book-sellers — as their 'shelf appeal' is indisputable and they deserve to achieve wide distribution.

However, glossy books are expensive. Many 'straight' children's book publishers' prices have already topped the £2.50 these books will be retailing at.

Interestingly, these four books disprove the view that such themes as racism or sexism may only be treated in a social realist way. *Arthur and Clementine* (tortoises) and *A Fortunate Catastrophe* (rats) cover sex roles in the domestic and family context while *The Bonobos*... (monkeys) and *Sugarpink Rose* (elephants) deal with sex roles in society generally — i.e. in the tribe/herd.

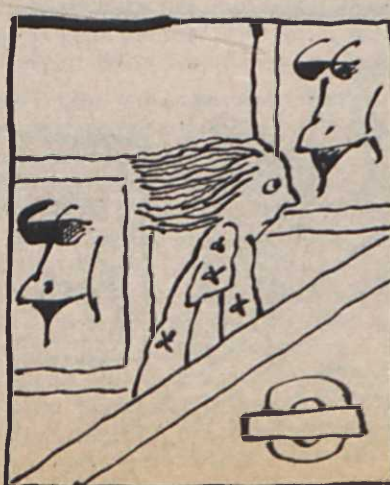
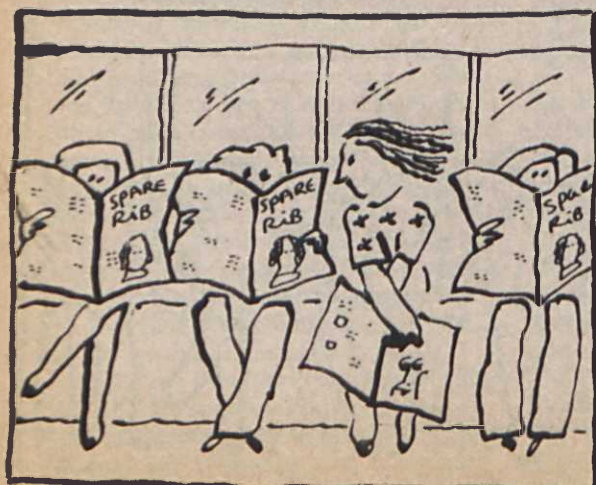
In all four, the 'message' is fairly obvious. But while these books will obviously prompt children to discuss sex roles, the bright detail of their pages will also absorb their interest in the story. The casting off of

her saccharine-pink frilly clothes as Annabelle the elephant gives up trying to conform to the girly elephant stereotype and thunders off to enjoy herself will certainly strike a chord with many children, as will the excruciating boredom of family meals in the Ratigan household as father Ratigan rat pontificates about his exploits. The absurdity of Arthur's constant gifts to Clementine that have to be piled up dizzily on her shell in *Arthur and Clementine* ridicules material accumulation as well as sex roles and here again the heroine breaks away to do her own thing. In *The Bonobos*... too, the possessions and 'culture' of the male monkeys are rejected by the females in favour of a paradise where they make musical instruments, and plant flowers and herbs.

But are these books anti-male. Well, certainly Clementine and the Bonobesses are shown to be exciting and creative in contrast to Arthur and the Bonobos, but Mr Ratigan as well as Mrs Ratigan benefit from the catastrophe that disrupts their very traditional family life.

Well-produced and well-illustrated, these four books will certainly occupy an important place among picture books. Not great literature perhaps, but a useful tool and a much needed alternative.

Rosemary Stones  
Children's Rights Workshop





# FOLK WITH FEELING

**W**hen I took up the banjo, d'you know what I was told? "That's a boy's instrument" and that's exactly why I took it up. Because I was a tomboy and I wanted to play it.

*Did you wish you were a little boy, like in your song 'I'm Gonna Be An Engineer'?*

"No, I never wished I was a boy. But I wished I had a boy's privileges and I used to hang around with my brother's crowd. They accepted me — but my mother didn't like it — particularly that I wore jeans until I was 21. I wasn't the lacy dress-up girl, I went traipsing around with my brother's friends, bicycling, tree climbing, the whole show.

*Was the way you learnt about music related to being a girl?*

The males in the family were not competitors really, they were sympathetic. Probably because I was my father's first girl after four boys, and my father, he was sold on me, which did help. I was brought up with a mother who worked, who regarded it as her right to work, and a father who was proud that my mother worked. She was a very good musician and a composer.

In my own family now, I have the same position that my mother had in hers — Ewan is proud of the things that I can do. We have someone who lives here who helps with the children and the money that I earn, part of it goes to pay her. I still do burn the candle at both ends because . . . well, there's that old joke about "a mother who works" and "a working mother". Soon there's got to be a spate of songs about a woman's schedule from the time she gets up — it's unbelievable. So as for the women's lib thing, I would say about seventy per cent of it with me is intellectual and only thirty per cent of it is experience . . . because most working mothers don't have it as easy as I do.

*Has it been a conflict — to keep going as a singer and a musician and as a mother too?*

Well, Ewan's mother lived with us for fifteen years, so she helped with the two boys. But I want to take more time with the littlest one, because I realise how precious it is and how easily lost. The women's liberationists can say as much as they like — I do need it and enjoy it, but it is a conflict because at

Peggy Seeger was born in 1935 into a musical American family. She plays five instruments (guitar, banjo, dulcimer, auto harp and concertina), sings, writes songs and teaches. She's made over three dozen LPs on her own, and another two dozen with Ewan MacColl, with whom she has lived and worked since the late 50s. Over that period she's been active in the British folk revival, to which she has contributed many new songs. 'Nine Month Blues', printed in this issue, is her latest.



When I was a little girl I wished I was a boy  
I tagged along behind the gang and  
wore my corduroys  
Everybody said I only did it to annoy  
But I was gonna be an engineer

I listened to my mother and I joined a typing pool  
I listened to my lover and I sent him through his school  
If I listen to the boss, I'm just a bloody fool  
And an underpaid engineer!

I been a sucker ever since I was a baby  
As a daughter, as a wife, as a mother and a dear —  
But I'll fight them as a woman, not a lady  
I'll fight them as an engineer!

the same time I love going out to sing. I love being able to make up songs that can put my thirty per cent of experience into somebody else's ninety per cent.

*Your song 'I'm Gonna Be An Engineer' is really popular.*

I know it is. And the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers has put out 50,000 copies on a cheap record. But what amazes me is that none of the disc jockeys have played it. Usually when a song reaches that degree of underground popularity . . . and yet you never hear it on the mass media. But this is where the nubbin is — you have to be a 'pop' person to sing it, so that it's remained underground.

I think one of the reasons people like 'The Engineer' is that it's not an anti-male song. Much of middle class women's lib takes an anti-male stand and that I find repulsive; because men are in the same trap as we are. It's on both sides and that's why I like to see women's lib in terms of basics, bread and butter issues, because these are the things that everyone understands. So that's where I hope I stand in a song like 'The Engineer' — let's get first things first, let's deal with the problem of the woman who wants to get out and do something of her own and isn't allowed, by not only men but by her mother, the education system, by her boss, by her children.

*Have you learned about women's history through folk songs?*

O gosh yes. I've certainly learned about women's various responses to the fact that they are a chained group of people. And women have found a lot of ways round this, believe me. The songs have in them the number of ruses that a woman uses, for instance to be allowed to choose her own mate. The right they earned to say "no, I will not be manipulated into this or that marriage". This probably forms fifty per cent of the story songs, the ballads and the broadsides. Whereas the lyric songs are on the whole those which express disappointment in love — very rarely happiness — and there's of course the union songs, the militant songs, the songs by women at their looms or at their kitchen sinks or in their factories. In America, from about the 1920s onwards, we had a tremendous number of really good women's bands and song writers, militant women (e.g. Aunt Molly Jackson, Sarah Ogan), more women than men I'd say.

*Do you identify more with some songs than with others, that have to do with women?*

I can get something out of a lot of different kinds of songs. I've had a few differences with people on a general political front and on a women's lib front who feel a song should have a



direct message. I think that a song should have something that political slogans don't have and that's an art, a humour, a musicality. It can still have the same ideas, you could probably express 'The Engineer' in eight or nine sentences in a political harangue, but it wouldn't appeal to people so much because they would feel that they were being got at. But every song does have it's own thing going for it, for example, a lament of a woman who has been loved and left — especially with a big belly. That I find tremendously poignant.

The ones that are most satisfying to sing as a musician are mostly the older songs. But your favourite song just has to be the one you're singing at the moment, otherwise you can't sing it with any conviction. Though I will say that since I gotten interested in women's lib, the women's songs have had more meaning for me. I can sing 'I Wish I Was A Single Girl Again' every now and then and I wish I was a single girl again, who doesn't? I'm sure my old man does too.

*You say that folksongs shouldn't be political slogans set to music — how do you see the relationship between folk music and politics?*

I never looked at a folksong politically till I met Ewan. I'm firmly of the opinion that you can't be a good folk revival singer unless you have a political standpoint. And the only way is to be on the left, that is to be on the side of the people who wrote the songs. Folk music is working class culture.

One thing that political parties seem to expect art to do is to express everything, in every song. But folk music isn't like that; it doesn't speak in general terms of the past. The important thing for a songwriter is to write about

what's happening to people (me, or my boyfriend over there) now. Sure, put history into it if you can. But often if you do, it turns into a dogmatic song, rather than a song in the folk idiom. There's so many personal stories: like the song 'The Cruel Mother'.

There was a lady lived in York  
All alone and aloney-o  
She proved a child by her own  
father's clerk  
Down by the green wood sidey-o

She leaned her back against a thorn  
All alone and aloney-o  
And there she had her baby born  
Down by the green wood sidey-o

She pulled out her long pen knife  
(All etc)  
And she took that sweet babe's life  
(Down by etc)

When we were with the Critic's Group<sup>1</sup>, one of the members came along with a clipping . . . the story of a 15-year-old girl who had an affair with the boy next door, who was also 15. She got pregnant. Her mother didn't know it. Her little sister knew it, who was 13. They noticed she was getting fat and the parents just let it ride and one night the girl had the baby in the bed with her sister. Her sister helped her. They strangled the child, put it in her school bag and dumped it into the rubbish bin. How many times that must have happened. The personal story, providing the language is right, has fantastic appeal to people.

*But why folk music? What about rock? That has a fantastic appeal too.*

Folk music seems to appeal to all ages. I don't mean as the only music. You

can write about almost anything in a folk idiom, in the language and inflection in which you speak. Folksongs have lasted a long time: some of the ballads are 500–600 years old. Their language is still accepted by people of all generations. We do mostly municipal concerts now, where you get kids and you get old age pensioners and they all go for roughly the same thing. People recognise a language which represents their thoughts and experience. Even though the experience isn't particularly their own. Folk music goes at the same rate that your mind goes; it's a conversational type of music, whereas rock'n'roll and rock tends to speed you up.

So mostly the songs I make up, I make up with a folk tune in mind, and as much as possible I use the kind of language that I'd use when I'm talking to somebody.

But I can't write a song without really feeling deeply about something. I have written songs which are stinkers, which no one's ever seen, they are the ones that I thought I should be feeling deeply about, but I didn't really. The abortion song I wrote was more or less commissioned. I was sent a lot of information which helped me not one bit — my own experience taught me more. You might say that this song is my experience . . . □

Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl are setting up a record company for "quick discs of political songs and slow discs of traditional songs". For information about the records, or for copies of 'New City Songster' (new songs in the folk idiom) write to Peggy Seeger, 35 Stanley Avenue, Bromley, Kent.

1. An active folk revival workshop from 1965–71 which produced political theatre (Festival Of Fools) and records, e.g. 'The Female Frolic' (Argo).

If you can't be careful, try to be good,  
Well, we cared and we cared as much as we could;  
We always agreed, me and my man,  
We said "Someday — we'll try the family plan."  
Well, the first thing we tried was nothing at all  
Cause a amateur rider never thinks he'll fall,  
We charted my tides, we followed my moon,  
But then SOMEDAY came a little too soon

CHORUS: I got the nine-month blues —  
Too much to gain, too much to lose,  
But he was kinda happy when he heard my news!  
I got the nine-month blues.

There was him and me and the baby made three  
But we made up our minds to stay that way,  
With little bitty things made of rubber and such,  
And 'cause we were friends we decide to go Dutch  
When we said 'I DO' it was a solemn oath  
So we did and we did and it pleased us both;  
We still can't figure out what went wrong,  
But that's the first line of the Nine Month Song, (etc)

CHORUS: I got the nine-month blues — (etc)  
My big sack dress and my sensible shoes (etc)

I said, "This time around I'm gonna cast my stone,  
I'm gonna have a chance to call my life my own!"  
But the S.P.U.C.<sup>2</sup> and the F.P.A.<sup>3</sup>,  
They said, "Keep your child! Don't flink it away!"  
The doctor said he had the right to refuse  
The law says if you want to beat the noose,  
You gotta be rich, or near to your grave  
So away I went again on my nine-month rave (etc)

CHORUS: But that time around I got 'em in twos (etc)

The next thing we tried was the capital 'P'  
And I-L-L is what that made me;  
My head bust open and I nearly went crazy  
And my moon started risin' every fourteen days,  
I says, I may be sick but I'm safe and free  
And we started makin' honey like a coupla bees;  
But one May morning, I musta forgot,  
It dropped me right back into the Nine Month Slot (etc)

CHORUS: Won't the old man be happy when he hears my news? (etc)

Kids everywhere, two-three-four-five  
I just can't swim without takin' that dive!  
I went for advice, they says to me:  
The next thing to try is the I.U.D.<sup>4</sup>  
But the small print allows that the Loopity-Loop  
Has a margin of error, then you're in the soup;  
But your kid'll be normal, so don't you fret,  
Even though you're leased a-for the Nine Month Let (etc)

CHORUS: Better get the old man to disconnect his fuse (etc)

Well, I love that man and I love my kids  
But if I have any more I'm gonna blow my lid!  
It's not just the forty weeks on my mind,  
It's also the washing 'hagin' on my line,  
It could be the worry on the old man's face  
Or thinkin' of the future of the female race;  
It all began with loving and laughter  
Then so much care for such a long time after, every (etc)

CHORUS: Don't you think we ought to have the right to choose  
To sing the twenty year blues?

1. This line changes with each new chorus.
2. Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child
3. Family Planning Association
4. Inter-Uterine Device, the coil

NINE MONTH BLUES





# Chinese Women

This month begins the first of a three part series on women in China. We know the society has changed dramatically since the Cultural Revolution eight years ago, but it's hard to find out what's been happening.

*Suki Colegrave*, author of the first two parts, visited China last winter. She found that though women's position has improved enormously since pre-revolutionary days, there are still many areas of inequality and exploitation. She examines this here, and in Part Two she considers the historical basis of this situation, in particular the course of the women's movement within the Chinese Communist Party. She is writing a book on the feminine and masculine principles in traditional Chinese culture.

In Part Three, *Delia Davin*, author of *Woman-Work*, who has lived and worked in China, responds to the previous articles. She explains the problems of building a socialist society in a third world country like China, and the changes that have been made despite the difficulties of breaking free from a heritage of feudal attitudes towards women. ►



# Chinese Women

My first impression of China was of poverty and hard work. Everywhere women and men strained under loads of girders, paving stones, vegetables and children. Canton, where we started, was a tumult of buses and cyclists weaving through occasional crocodiles of children off to do their stint in the local factory or agricultural production brigade. There were fewer slogans, more people, poorer dirtier houses, more austerity, more equality and more women doing traditionally female jobs than I had expected.

This was China seen through the eyes of a western 'bourgeois intellectual'. But, as our interpreters constantly reminded us, China must be compared with pre-revolutionary days and not with the West. Chinese people are now healthy, housed, clothed, literate and, for the most part, politically active. For the first time in their history, the majority have good reasons for believing the government is on their side.

## Not human beings

A similar perspective is necessary to understand the position of women in China. Before liberation women of all social classes were the victims of the Confucian ideology which stipulated that they must obey their fathers, then their husbands and finally their sons. They were not considered to be human beings but were bought and sold in marriage, sometimes as child brides, sold into concubinage and physically assaulted at the whim of their fathers and husbands.

The proportion of material to cultural oppression endured by a woman varied according to the social class of her husband or father. Very poor families in south China could not afford to bind the feet of their women as their labour was needed in the fields. In return for their hard work outside the home these women's large

feet were the object of scorn and abuse by the rest of society. However, they enjoyed greater physical and cultural freedom than those women from rich peasant and landlord families who were taught from an early age not to show their teeth when they smile, not to raise their head when spoken to and not to be seen outside the home. These women had also to endure the ignominies of the concubinage system; any day they might be displaced in their husband's favour by a younger and sexier woman. But middle class women had a more secure economic existence than poor peasant women, although in most landlord families, except for the very rich, all women had to work hard while their husbands grew their fingernails.

Women's work was unceasing; they had to pound the wheat, husk the rice, gather firewood, make clothes, collect water, care for the children and serve their husbands and his parents. In return they were abused by their husbands, and were the servants in a culture which insisted on male heirs both to support the parents in old age and to perform sacrifices to the ancestors. Exhausted by endless pregnancies, too little food, despair and physical cruelty, many Chinese women were eager to support a social system which offered them freedom of marriage and divorce, equal pay and opportunity for all, the right to own land, an end of foot-binding and concubinage, planned pregnancies, adequate food, housing, childcare and medical care. But some of these promises have not been kept.

## Housewives' factories

Chinese women still do not receive equal pay for equal work in many parts of China. There are a number of ways in which this important right is circumvented. Some of these are familiar to women in Western industrial societies, others are peculiar to China, notably the phenomenon of housewives' factories.

These neighbourhood cooperatives were set up during



the Cultural Revolution by women, in response to Mao's call for 'housewives' to contribute to production. We visited one in Changsha which makes amplifiers and another outside Shanghai making shoes. In both the staff were almost exclusively female. The few male workers were, we were told, unfit for work in the larger, noisier and busier state factories. But women workers, however fit, are never offered the chance to graduate from these small workshops to the higher wages of the state factories. These obvious disadvantages have to be seen against the fact that the neighbourhood factories are often much more conveniently located than the state ones. Frequently, they are situated within a few minutes walk of the school, shops and homes of those who work in them. They also appear to enjoy some of the benefits of small scale production; they seemed quieter, less structured and more friendly.

Some time in the future, no doubt, these small factories will be absorbed into the state system but this could mean that their workers will lose the advantages of the small units without gaining full economic equality with the male workers in the state factories.

## 'Women's work' and equal pay

One of the most common means by which equal pay for equal work is avoided in China is through the operation of a strict, though not rigid, sexual division of labour. We visited one such factory in Changsha in which men operated the large machines and women the smaller ones. Although there was little difference in the physical strength required to work the two kinds of machines, the men were paid 50 yuan a month while the women only received 40 yuan. Elsewhere in this factory, equal pay for men and women doing *identical* jobs was practised, although this is still not true for all parts of China. Where possible, it seemed, equal pay was avoided by the well known technique of classifying the 'female jobs' as less productive, less skilled or lighter than the 'male jobs'.

Explanations for this situation varied from reminders that old prejudices die hard (especially when they are seen by men to pay) to assertions that women *are* weaker than men. The prejudice about women's frailty is particularly ironic, where women have traditionally, in parts of China, been the beasts of burden and still, today, can be seen pulling and carrying enormous loads along the streets and over the fields. Moreover we found it difficult to communicate our point that heavier machines do not necessarily mean heavier work and that, irrespective of who does the heaviest work, it should not automatically be rewarded more highly than the lighter work.

The widespread sexual division of labour in China is openly justified with such convictions as "women are more patient, better at intricate work and more suited to caring for children than men". I was told by one man that "women are more suited to cooking although men are the better cooks".

The definition of 'female' work is similar to Western definitions. In education the teaching of young children is considered 'women's work' with the proportion of male to female teachers increasing up the educational hierarchy until one reaches Peking University where the great majority of teachers are men. However the Chinese situation in this respect differs from Britain in that female jobs do not necessarily receive less pay than male jobs. Since the Cultural Revolution the organisation of wage increases has changed from rewarding expertise to increasing the wages of the lowest paid according to their experience and political consciousness. This indirectly improves the position of women in those jobs which might be classified as less 'expert' than 'male jobs' by a male dominated revolutionary committee.

A second important difference between China and many Western countries is that many 'female jobs' like nursing and secretarial work are not necessarily dead end jobs nor are they so rigidly defined as their names suggest. It is possible for a nurse to take a few extra courses and qualify as a doctor and secretaries appear to enjoy greater

autonomy in their work than Western secretaries. This is part of the general de-professionalisation of Chinese society which followed the Cultural Revolution. By seeking to reduce the dependence of the individual on experts and institutions, Chinese policy enables people to develop their own creativity and resourcefulness for the good of the society.

The sexual division of labour only becomes a target of criticism by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) when it is seen to directly conflict with the requirements of production. In these cases the slogan "anything a man can do a woman can also do" is used to attack the old ideas. The complementary slogan "anything a woman can do a man can also do" does not exist. Great publicity is given to women engineers, train drivers, miners, and builders but Chinese people are never asked to admire and emulate male kindergarten teachers or male secretaries.

With 800 million people to support, and a very low level of economic development inherited from pre-revolutionary times, production is an overwhelmingly important goal in China and women's issues are generally defined in relation to it. But when production and male prejudice are not threatened, substantial improvements in women's social and economic conditions have been implemented. The 56 days paid maternity leave in state factories is an example of this. But in the communes, which are collectively, not state owned, this and other steps to improve the position of women are still in their infancy compared to the towns. Any time a woman takes off to have or care for a baby or do other domestic work reduces her total earnings.

## Slower change in the country

The countryside also lags behind the cities in the organisation of kindergartens. Everywhere we saw young mothers with children doing the traditionally female jobs; washing clothes and vegetables and preparing food. No one suggested to us they should be paid or that they should have the freedom not to fulfil this role if they wished. The attitude prevails of 'It is right because this is how it has always been'. However many traditional Chinese superstitions and prejudices have been the object of intensive propaganda campaigns since 1949, so the persistence of old ideas in relation to women cannot be excused on grounds of caution or with the argument that the changing economic situation will dispel them without the need for direct confrontation.

Rural women also suffer more than urban women from



# Chinese Women

the prejudice that heavy work is more valuable than light work and not suitable for women. Their work point norms, which determine their wages, reflect this, usually averaging one or two points less than those of men. In Tachai, the model production brigade in Hsiyang county, men average ten points a day and women only about eight and a half.

The justifications we received when we commented on these basic inequalities between men and women usually in some way came down to the importance of increasing production. Heavy work was more onerous and in a society with very little mechanization it must be better rewarded than lighter work. Without necessarily accepting this reasoning, it is important to remember that China is still an extremely poor country. Housing conditions are cramped, often with no sanitation and three or four people sharing one room. Food is adequate but not plentiful. When we were in Shanghai a vegetable rationing system had just been introduced to ensure a fair distribution of a poor harvest. Clothing is very simple; patched clothes are encouraged by being rewarded with high political status.

This low level of economic development is also used to excuse the scarcity of facilities to socialize domestic labour. But male prejudice seems to me as much to blame for the absence of rural canteens, sewing stations, and laundries as poverty. The cost of these services need not be high. The important thing is to break the monotony and time-consuming nature of this work by bringing men and women together to do it. However priority decisions are still made by the male dominated political hierarchy.

## "Frailty" maintains inequality

China's pattern of political power in respect to women is similar in some respects to that of many other countries. Although many of the lower levels of institutions are run by women the number of women in leading positions at the higher levels is significantly small. Those women who have succeeded in securing influential positions have often had to pay for their responsibility by accepting, uncritically, the priorities formulated by men. A woman interpreter explained to me why the Chairmen of most Revolutionary Committees (the units of organisation which run all levels of society) tend to be men with women in the position of Vice Chairmen. "You see", she said, "the Chairman's task is to manage and to organize, a job obviously more suited to men; whereas the task of dealing with personal relations is that of the Vice Chairman, clearly a more female job." She questioned neither the assumption implicit in her statement that biology determines psychology, nor that the managerial role was more important than dealing with people's personal problems and relations with each other. She also explained to me why women rarely hold as demanding jobs as men in China: "Women," she said, "are particularly frail during

their monthly periods and should not be given strenuous work during these times."

I feel that women's frailty is not improved by the absence of disposable tampons in China: apparently tampax is still considered a 'bourgeois luxury'. Once a month women go to special washing stations to wash out their menstrual pads.

Realities become prejudices when the historical conditions which created them have changed. In traditional China, with endless pregnancies and little hygiene education, of course women were frail compared to men. But now, with a national health care system, free contraception and significant social and political changes, women are no longer the frail victims of ill-health. However a convenient prejudice has been created which buttresses male political domination.

Although physical frailty is only a rationale for their continued political oppression, it is significant that Chinese women appear to acquiesce to both the prejudice and the political inequality it supports. There is little evidence that women either challenge their subordinate position in the CCP and administration or the basic Party line on the women's question. This policy (discussed more fully in Part Two) unofficially states that the inequalities and oppressions still experienced by women today will be resolved not by any direct campaigns but as spin-offs from other campaigns and with the gradual consolidation of socialism.

Today the two major campaigns are 'Learn from Tachai', a movement designed to encourage economic self-reliance and agricultural mechanization, and the campaign to criticise the 'Shui Hu', a fourteenth century novel about banditry and rebellion, translated into English with the title 'All Men Are Brothers'; the purpose of the campaign is to remind the Chinese that all men are not brothers, some are the class enemy. Ostensibly neither of these campaigns were conceived to improve, even indirectly, the position of women, but 'Learn from Tachai' may improve the unequal pay in the countryside as it will reduce the importance for heavy physical labour.

Although the CCP policy toward women has not been openly challenged there is evidence that some people at the highest levels of the administration are very aware of the promises to women which have still not been kept. In 1972, Soong Ching Ling wrote in the national press: "History has proved that Women's Liberation in China began with the democratic revolution, but will be completed only in the socialist revolution." She explained that inequalities between men and women are due to the persistence of the 'feudal-patriarchal' ideology among the peasants. She then lists five areas in which these inequalities are most serious: equal pay for equal work, more boys than girls attending school, the fact that the payment of bride prices persists, as does the demand for male children, and the unquestioned assumption that housework is woman's work.□

*Next month I shall examine the history of the CCP women's movement and the implications for men and women in China of a political system dominated by men and a masculine oriented ideology.* □

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**Mother:** What do you think of comics?  
**Katie:** Well, in boys' comics all the boys are superheroes and things like that, and all the girls in the girls' comics are either famous already or get famous and rich in the end. That's what I don't like about it. And I was thinking they could have a happy ending in a different sort of way. I mean it can be a happy ending without you getting rich and stuff.

Katie: Like Beryl the Peril in Topper and Sammy Scribbles and Whosee the Whatsit who's a monster and Foxy who's a fox.



# OUT OF TOUCH

Carol Wright,  
18 Southcote Road  
Tufnell Park, London N19

Three-year-old: "I don't know if they were little boys and girls, because they didn't have any clothes on."

"I am starting the first of a series of children's workshops in my area. The workshop will be open from 8am-6pm Monday to Friday, catering for 20 pre-school and about 25 school-children. It will aim to provide nursery and after-school facilities, and will be run by parents — about 40 contributing 2½ hours a week — and qualified staff. Would any women interested in participating in this collective please write to me: Ms. A.E. MacDonald, 68 Browning Ave., Worcester Park, Surrey."





# DORY PREVIN

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